leigh old town
conservation area appraisal
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1. INTRODUCTION

Conservation areas are ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). They were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967.

Designation of a conservation area extends planning controls over certain types of development, principally the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees. Local authorities will also formulate policies in their local plans or local development frameworks to preserve the character of their conservation areas. However, designation does not prevent any change within conservation areas, and they will be subject to many different pressures (good and bad) that will affect their character and appearance.

Government Planning Policy Guidance 15, Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15), emphasises that the character of Conservation Areas derives not simply from the quality of individual buildings, but also depends on ‘the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular “mix” of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of space between buildings’ (para. 4.2). Thus it is ordinary buildings, and the spaces between them, which it is important to preserve and enhance if conservation areas are to retain their special character.

Local authorities have a duty to designate conservation areas, and to formulate policies for their preservation and enhancement. They are advised to review each conservation area from time to time, to ensure that it has an up-to-date character appraisal which sets out its special architectural or historic interest and that its boundaries are appropriate. The character appraisal will be the basis for the management of the area, including development control and the preparation of enhancement proposals. Management proposals for the conservation area should be published in conjunction with the character appraisal.

All the Borough’s conservation areas are being reviewed in order to produce up-to-date character appraisals and management proposals in accordance with national guidance. Other areas which might be suitable for designation are also being assessed. In each case the character appraisal will:

- identify the area’s special interest
- review existing conservation area boundaries
- assist preparation of the Local Development Framework and form part of its evidence base
- provide a basis for implementing policies, making informed development control decisions and preparing management proposals for the area.

The character appraisal will lead to the management proposals 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
• establish principles for implementing and monitoring proposals.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council commissioned Essex County Council to prepare this conservation area appraisal and review in February 2008. The research and fieldwork were carried out in June and July 2008 and updated in summer 2009.

2. LOCATION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Topography and Landscape

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. Its situation at the bottom of the cliffs has meant that it has spread almost exclusively along only one street, the High Street, which is lined with buildings that turn their backs to the sea and the cliffs. The town has sprawled, but this has of necessity been sideways only.

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.

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. 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.

2.2 Urban Setting

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 area is elongated and curves with the shape of the coastline. The urban setting can be broken up into several distinct character zones, which will be fully explored in section four, but 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.

The town has an atmosphere of great age, partially owing to its curving main street, narrow alleyways and sympathetic infill buildings, but in fact few of the buildings are very old, most being late Victorian or newer. Most buildings are fairly modest and the close spacing feels more urban than one might expect from a settlement with such a small population. In this way it is not dissimilar from the urban landscapes depicted by L. S. Lowry. There are, however, gaps between the buildings that afford views of the sea and lend the townscape a refreshing
informality that is an important part of its charm.

2.3 Character Statement

The Conservation Area dates back to Domesday and has been a small fishing settlement from the earliest times. This industrial nature is the defining aspect of its character today. The grain of the town and its plan, although extended, 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 buildings are generally arranged along one long street, forming a long narrow strip at the base of the cliff. Few buildings remain from before the end of the 19th century but the majority of buildings display the simple utilitarian character common to many industrial villages.

The feel of much of the Conservation Area is intimate and enclosed although this is relieved in several places by wide views of the estuary glimpsed from between buildings or 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.

3. PLANNING FRAMEWORK

3.1 National Policies and Guidance


3.2 Local Planning Policies and Guidance


The Southend-on-Sea Local Development Framework (LDF) is under preparation and will gradually supersede the Replacement Structure Plan and the Local Plan. The Core Strategy (adopted December 2007) is a Development Plan Document (DPD) that forms part of the LDF and sets out the objectives and strategy for the
Borough’s development and key policies against which planning policies will be assessed.

In addition to the Core Strategy the LDF will include a number of other DPDs of particular relevance to the Conservation Area, planned for adoption in the near future. These will include:

- Seafront Area Action Plan
- Criteria-Based Policies and Site Allocations.

The LDF will also include Supplementary Planning Documents, of which the Southend-on-Sea Design and Townscape Guide 2009 is of particular relevance.

Some saved policies in the Local Plan remain relevant for the time being. These include a comprehensive set of policies to protect and enhance the historic character and townscape of the Borough (Policies (C1-C20). In particular, Policy C5 applies specifically to Leigh Old Town. It states that:

“...the council will require the retention of commercial, leisure and residential uses appropriate to its character as a working marine village, and will seek to reduce vehicular access for non-essential traffic. Permission will normally be refused for the loss of marine industrial uses and associated facilities. Development of existing cockle sheds to provide improved processing facilities will be encouraged...”

In addition policy C4 (Conservation Areas) sets out the principles for development in conservation areas to ensure it is sympathetic and to a high standard of design as follows.

“POLICY C4 - CONSERVATION AREAS
All buildings, open spaces, gardens, trees, views from public places and other aspects of the environment which contribute to the character of Conservation Areas will be protected and enhanced. Proposals for demolition and development will normally be permitted only where they would not be detrimental to the local scene and the character of the area. All development affecting Conservation Areas should meet the following requirements:

(i) The position and design of new buildings should respect the general pattern of development of the area, and should preserve or enhance as appropriate its townscape character,
(ii) The mass of extensions and new buildings should be in scale and harmony with the existing and neighbouring buildings and with the area as a whole,
(iii) The proportions, detailing and materials of extensions, alterations and new buildings should be appropriate to the area and sympathetic to the existing and neighbouring buildings. All development in Conservation Areas will be expected to comply with the Council’s design guidelines in Appendix 2 and in addition, where residential proposals are involved, Appendix 4. The Council will prepare enhancement schemes for Conservation Areas as resources permit.”

To this end, the Borough Council carries out conservation area character appraisals to clearly assess and define their character, allowing informed planning decisions and identification of what should be preserved and enhanced. Policies C2 and C3 are concerned with the preservation of the character, historic interest and setting of historic buildings. The Borough supplements the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest by a local list of buildings of local or
historic interest. Inclusion in this list is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

### 3.3 Regeneration

The Seafront Area Action Plan, part of the LDF, will have implications for the future management of the area. It will contain policies and site specific proposals aimed at strengthening the role of Southend’s Seafront area as a successful leisure and tourist attraction, and as a place to live.

The Leigh Old Town Conservation Area falls within Character Zone 2 of the Seafront Area Action Plan. It is programmed for consultation in the near future and does not have immediate relevance to this appraisal.

### 3.4 Designations

Leigh Old Town is one of 14 Conservation Areas in the Borough of Southend-on-Sea.

There are three buildings within the Conservation Area on the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, namely The Crooked Billet pub and 62 – 63 High Street. An additional four buildings are included on the Borough’s Local List. These are: 2 and 3 Plumbs Yard, 74-74a High Street (The Custom House) and 39a High Street (Wharf Cottage).

Additional protection from development within the conservation area is provided by the Leigh Old Town Article 4 direction. This withdraws certain permitted development rights so that planning permission is now required for several types of work including:
“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”

The Article 4 direction does not cover the whole of the Conservation Area but is restricted to the area shown on the map below in green.

![Figure 2: The extent of the Article 4 Direction for Leigh Old Town](image)

Leigh Old Town Conservation Area

4. ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

4.1 Archaeological Interest

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.

There has, however, been on recent archaeological investigation on the site of 2 Plumbs Cottage which was carried out when it was being rebuilt in 2006. This revealed evidence at least two earlier buildings on this site, one Georgian and an earlier Tudor building.
4.2 Historic Context

4.2.1 First Settlement

Leigh is first recorded in 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. 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 12551.

5.2.2 Cartographic Evidence

The Chapman and André map of Essex, 1777 shows Leigh, or Lee as it is marked, as a settlement closely hugging the coast and creeping up Leigh Hill, with the High Street lined on either side with a single row of buildings and a couple of short streets leading away 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.

The Tithe Award map for the Parish of Leigh 1847 more clearly shows the settlement pattern which by this time as begun to extend up the hill towards the church. The number of wharfs has increased to 3 and the oyster pits are identified within the creek and foreshore area. The original customs house and the original Peter Boat and Smack pubs are also labelled.

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1 Bride, 1994, p5
The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 shows Leigh Old Town as quite similar to its modern appearance. The railway line was, by this time, long established, having arrived in 1854, and this has ever since formed a barrier between the Old Town and the rest of Leigh. The first edition map shows no signs of the cockle sheds that are now such a strong feature of the western end of the conservation area and these do not appear on the maps until the third edition Ordnance survey map of 1922.

Although the cockle sheds were not yet in place the first edition OS map indicates disused fishponds among the mudflats in Leigh Creek south of the Conservation Area. These are an interesting part of Leigh’s history; H. N. Bride reports that 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. This was an effective means of storage, keeping them fresh as long as possible close to hand and with straightforward access.
Figure 5: Ordnance survey maps showing recent development of Leigh Old Town Conservation Area. From top to bottom: First edition, 1875, 2nd Edition 1897, 3rd Edition 1922, 4th Edition 1939,
4.3 The Changing Roles of the Town

4.3.1 Leigh as a Port

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"\(^2\). Its importance 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.

4.3.2 Leigh’s Ship and Boat Building History

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 8 ships of between 180 and 340 tonnes were recorded as being built at Leigh\(^3\). 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.

The sixteenth 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. 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 of Portland Bill and in a running fight extending over three

\(^2\) Bride, 1994, p6
\(^3\) Bride, 1994, p9
days and they lost forty vessels\textsuperscript{4}

The Mayflower

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\textsuperscript{5}. 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\textsuperscript{6} in 1620.

4.3.3 Leigh’s Fishing History

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.

The cockling that Leigh is known for today took over in the twentieth century. Originally cockles would be racked 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 1980’s.

\textsuperscript{4} Bride,1994 p7
\textsuperscript{5} Burrows Paper 1932
\textsuperscript{6} Williams,2002 p15
The Endeavour

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.

The Endeavour Restored and moored in Leigh Creek

During World War II, Endeavour, along with five other Leigh craft were 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.

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.

Smuggling

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. 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.

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 offer 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.

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 Peter Boat does today, adjoined Alley Dock where a narrow path once led up the hill to Dawes Heath, an area well know for the concealment and dispersion of illegal goods and a notorious rendezvous for highwaymen. 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. The last recorded smuggler to be apprehended by Leigh customs officers was in 1856.

4.3.4 Leigh's Mariners

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

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7 Bride, 1994, p5
8 Bride, 1994, p22
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.

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 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.

4.3.6 Village Life

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.

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:

- 8 bakers
- 3 butchers
- grocers
- boot or shoe manufacturers
- 2 drapers
- 3 milliners
- 4 coal merchants
- 2 boatbuilders
- 2 carpenters
- 2 basketmakers, one of which was also a cooper
- A blacksmith, a gardener, a plumber, a bricklayer, a furniture broker, a hairdresser, three teachers at national schools and three at Lady Sparrows schools.

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9 Bride, 1995, p.41

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The water supply to the village was provided by a conduit fed by a spring on the cliff top to the west of Rectory Grove on land call Tile Kiln Meadow belonging to Lady Olivia Sparrow who was lady of the Manor at that time. The fountain head was for many years marked by a stone bearing the inscription:

‘This stone is placed at ye spring head belonging to the conduit by desier of the parishioners of Leigh 1712. William Hutton Churchwarden’

Today this stone has been relocated to the site of the conduit which can still be seen today adjacent to number 36 High Street. The conduit is believed to have held a tank of 44 hogs head capacity that supplied water to the village but it was notoriously unreliable and had to be enclosed with gates and rationed when supplies became scarce. Ultimately the water supply became inadequate and a further two wells had to be sink within the old town itself to ensure an adequate supply of water to the villagers.

As Leigh’s fortunes declined it became prone to epidemics, with serious outbreaks of cholera in 1849 and 1866. The latter caused the hurried building of drains, paid for by the residents at a cost of £84. Poverty and poor living conditions were a serious problem. Much of the poor housing was demolished in the twentieth century, only plumbs cottages and the conduit remain as a reminder of these times and conditions.

4.3.6 The Arrival of the Railway

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 affect on the old town as the railway literally cut the Old Town 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. 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. 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.

10 Williams, 2002, p53
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. Bride reports that 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.” 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. It was replaced by the current station in 1934 and is now the base for Leigh Sailing Club.

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. But 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.

A similar 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.

4.4 Character of townscape

Leigh Old Town was, for much of its history, a fishing port and this aspect of it has been well preserved with many references to its past still to be found simply by walking around it. The main street is winding and narrow, and the other paths and alleyways around it are still smaller and often quite enclosed. At the eastern end of the Area glimpses of the sea can be sudden and startling, appearing unexpectedly between buildings.
Views inland, over the railway and up the cliffs are more readily obtained and are less rewarding, as they are always compromised by the detritus of the railway, such as overhead lines, chain-link fencing and its associated untidiness. The Area feels remote from the rest of Leigh, divided off, as it is, by the railway.

While its origins as a fishing village are still readily apparent, as the port is still operational, Leigh Old Town is also now a popular resort with a good mix of pubs, cafes and restaurants, as well as a few gift and craft shops.

Further west the Area is more exclusively industrial and as a result is rather less picturesque. However 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 and preservation 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.

4.5 Character and Interrelationship of Spaces

There are several open spaces within the conservation area, although very few green spaces. Between the cockle sheds and the Crooked Billet there is a large expanse that is dominated by Belton Bridge. The space below the bridge 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.
To the east of the Belton Bridge area the open spaces are mainly wharves, including Billet Wharf, Strand Wharf, Bell Wharf and Victoria Wharf. Beyond the Leigh Sailing Clubhouse there is a small area of beach and a footpath that runs beside land belonging to the sailing club. These areas all have hard surfaces and, apart from the beach and footpath, are all originally related to the industry of the area. Several would benefit from improvement schemes, such as Strand Wharf, which was the only publicly owned quay even from earliest times11 and whose historic importance should be recognised as such. It is understood that an environmental improvement scheme is being considered for this area.

To the west of the Conservation Area there are views out over extensive green spaces, including Belton Hills, Leigh Marsh and towards Two Tree Island. These are designated as Local Wildlife Sites, some of which have European importance as birdlife habitats.

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11 H N Bride, 1994, p27
4.6 Architecture of the Conservation Area

4.6.1 Age of buildings
Few pre-20th 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.

There are one or two buildings dating from the 16th century, including the Crooked Billet and 62-63 High Street. The Peter Boat pub was another building dating back to the 16th century until it burned down in 1892 and was subsequently rebuilt. One of the best known buildings in the High Street, until it was demolished in 1952\(^\text{12}\), was known as Juniper’s, which, according to John Bundock, had in its walls a stone with the date 1589 carved on it\(^\text{13}\) and may have been where John Constable stayed when he painted Hadleigh Castle\(^\text{14}\). A modern version of this building was erected on the site in 2004-5.

Most other pre-20th century buildings 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, identifiable with ‘the great house at the strand’. The Old Smithy, which is now Leigh Heritage Centre was built in the 1860s, and Plumbs Yard Cottages were also

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{Bettley & Pevsner, 1994, p704} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}}\text{Bundock, 1978, plate 8} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{14}}\text{Bride, 1994, p24} \]
built in the mid 19th century. 2 Plumbs Yard, however, is partly rebuilt as the south and west walls collapsed during refurbishment work in 2006.

The most notable building of modern times in the area is the Boathouse restaurant, which is a converted boat-shed, with a sleek new glass façade. This building is a good illustration of how modern design can be integrated into a group of old buildings.
4.7 Character of Buildings

Most of the buildings in the conservation area are traditionally built, domestic in form and scale, two-storey or else are light industrial sheds of modest size and also of traditional construction, some of which have now been converted to other uses.

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 1 Cockle Shed Row. The cockle sheds typically have well painted shiplap boarded walls and corrugated iron roofs. 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.
4.7.1 Materials and Details

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 53–58 High Street have shiplap boarding and this is out of character for non-commercial buildings in the Area.

4.7.2 Scale

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 62-63 High Street and The Crooked Billet have rooms in the roof, giving a third floor, which is unusual for the Conservation Area.

4.7.3 Walls

The building fabric is predominantly yellow stock bricks, some with red brick decorative details, feather edged weather boarding and shiplap boarding.
4.7.4 Roofs

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, Junipers and 62-63 High Street which have, or originally had, roofs covered with hand made plain clay tiles.

Generally there are shallow pitched slate, clay plain tiles on older buildings and corrugated sheet metal on the more industrial buildings,

4.7.5 Windows

Old Leigh seems largely to have escaped the worst of the rash of uPVC windows and doors that plagues so many conservation areas, and whether the reason for this is lack of resources, sympathy with the character of the Area or good enforcement of the Article 4 direction, the result is to be celebrated. Unfortunately some have slipped through, 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.
4.7.6  Signage
Much of the signage is modest, hand painted, and full of character which makes a significant positive contribution to the conservation area and should be used to inform new proposals for signage in the area.

4.8  Street Descriptions and Character Zones
Since there is only one main street in the Conservation Area the descriptions follow the character zones which have been identified. These are:

- West of Belton Bridge
- Belton Bridge Area
- Crooked Billet to 5 High Street
- Victoria Wharf and beyond
- Alley Dock and Strand Wharf
4.8.1 West of Belton Bridge

One long narrow road, an extension of the High Street, runs from Belton Bridge to the end of the Conservation Area and beyond. The single track winds around the bottom of the bridge, curves to follow the line of the cockle sheds, and then continues past two boat-builders and out of the Conservation Area close to Leigh-on-Sea railway station. The road feels inhospitable and enclosed in places, trapped as it is between the chainlink fence of the railway and the line of cockle sheds, followed by storage areas filled with scrap metal, grounded boats and workshops. The area feels private, and the casual visitor can feel more like a trespasser at times, especially once the cockle sheds have been left behind.

The cockle sheds are mostly very well maintained and look cared for. 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. They are less charming than the ramshackle sheds depicted in old photographs of the area, but clearly the old sheds would not have been suitable for today’s industry. The sheds are, for the most part newly painted in rather shiny dark gloss colours that are clearly chosen to be hard wearing and durable. 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 has recently been provided with a new waterfront and surfaced to enable car-parking and larger plant and machinery to operate. The surface treatment of cockle shells is entirely in keeping with the use of the area and pleasing to the eye. The effect could be improved with a car parking area and improved housekeeping, particularly with regard to storage of rubbish and scrap materials. There are many storage containers which look temporary and are an eyesore, and a more permanent solution should be considered. The machinery makes the visitor feel vulnerable although public access to this area is permitted.

The character zone 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.

4.8.2 Belton Bridge Area

The area between the cockle sheds and the beginning of the High Street proper, at the mini-roundabout just before the Crooked Billet, has the feeling of being an interchange between the two parts of the town, and its character is more no-mans-land than a place in its own right. Attempts have clearly been made to counteract this, with several benches lining the base of the bridge and some signs by the waterfront. The area below the bridge is taken up with car parking. This area is very utilitarian and unattractive and it feels forbidding although the relatively large area of open space affords very attractive views over the Estuary, which encourage
visitors to turn their back on the bridge and the car park to look out across the water and Leigh Creek. This character zone would be an ideal location for some enhancement to the conservation area without any detrimental impact on the industry that underpins the local economy.

4.8.3 Crooked Billet to 5 High Street

This zone is more mixed use in 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 lends the area a very lively character with its own identity as a place to live and work as well as a tourist destination. 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, adding to the relaxed feel.
Low levels of traffic in the area encourage people to walk down the middle of the street, giving a holiday atmosphere to the place. This is a welcome change from the usual dominance of motorised vehicles.

The buildings are generally modest in scale and, though most lack special architectural interest, the general effect is both positive and in tune with the character of the area. The Peter Boat pub and Theobalds Cottages were rebuilt after the 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 rather more intimate feel, which continues until the road opens out again by the car park opposite The Strand.

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.

There is some modern infill, the conversion of an old boat building shed to the Boatyard Restaurant and the rebuilt Junipers at 8 High Street have been successfully integrated into the streetscene. The terrace at 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.

4.8.4 Victoria Wharf and Beyond

On passing 5 High Street going east the Conservation Area takes on a more spread out disjointed character. Buildings are laid out more sparsely and the clearly defined building line is lost beyond this point. Instead buildings, such as The Den, the former sail loft shared between the Leigh Fishermen’s co-op and the police, the public WCs and the Sailing Club, are laid out on an informal square made up of Victoria and Bell Wharves. 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.
4.8.5 Alley Dock and Strand Wharf

Alley Dock is the only road in the Conservation Area that is not part of the High Street. It stretches from behind the Peter Boat pub and links to the promenade that runs from near the base of Belton Bridge to the outdoor area adjacent to the Peter Boat. After the pub the promenade turns away from the sea and becomes a back alley between the 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, despite some unattractive boundary treatments. The granite setts contribute much to the success of this space. The yellow lines are unfortunate and some alternative solution should be sought to prevent parking, which can be a problem. Near to Strand Wharf, Alley Dock widens and the lane returns to the High Street beside the Strand Tea Rooms.

Strand Wharf was historically the only publicly owned wharf in Leigh. It, and Plumbs Yard adjacent, is extremely untidy with copious seemingly scrap materials scattered around, large weedy areas and the charming Plumbs Yard cottages, one of which has been recently rebuilt and turned into a museum extension to Leigh Heritage Centre and the other which is used as a workshop. Behind these cottages the relatively huge Sea King boat-builders looms large with a prominent sign, an abrupt reminder of the Area’s industrial character. It is understood that an environmental enhancement scheme is being considered for this area which would be welcomed.
4.9 Townscape

4.9.1 Road and path surfaces
Road surfaces to the east of the Area beyond 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 appears to have the effect of slowing the speed of traffic, allowing pedestrians to share the road with the intermittent motorised traffic. The rest of the Area has rather patchy surfacing, primarily dark grey tarmacadum. Footpaths are similar in most cases, although Alley Dock is cobbled and one or two paths and wharves have brick surfaces. The new surface behind the cockle sheds is of ground up cockle shells, an entirely appropriate finish which is successful and sustainable. Most surfaces are heavily patched and need repair. The many necessary repairs 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.

4.9.2 Trees
Very few trees exist in the Conservation Area and this is appropriate for its industrial seaside character. However the trees that do exist act as welcome breaks in views and serve to soften the Area. These are generally small and deciduous, tucked into occasional corners, growing as though tolerated rather than prized, in locations that serve no other use to the community.

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.
4.9.3  Street Furniture

The street furniture in Leigh Old Town is very varied both in style and in contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

4.9.4  Signposts

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 very unsightly signs such as advertisement posters at the Peter Boat pub and advertisement signs on the side of the Coral Hole.

Most of the signs by the cockle sheds are sympathetic. There are some signs in plastics that are unfortunate and indicate the start of a turn away from the attractive older signage that is still dominant. 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 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.
4.9.5 Streetlights

The streetlights in the Area are primarily low level traditional style. Taller ones by Belton Bridge are modern but of a traditional type. The streetlights in the High Street are attractive in 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.

Left and centre: Attractive street lighting but in need of repair and maintenance
Right: Modern streetlights on Belton Bridge

4.9.6 Boundary treatments

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, brown trellis at 64, a high concrete wall at the scout hut and metal palings at the Lynn Tait gallery. Boundary treatments are more commonly found at the sides are rear of buildings. 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.

Examples of good boundary treatments

Inappropriate boundary treatments: Clockwise from top left: chain link fence at The Coal Hole, Heras fencing at Mike’s Boatyard, chain link fencing at Leigh Sailing Club and concrete slats in Alley Dock

Old photographs of Leigh Old Town reveal an interesting mix of fencing including picket fencing, some of which was as tall as a man, 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.

4.9.7 Containers

Storage containers for various businesses in the Old Town have been located in full view of the High Street and this has had a detrimental impact on local character. Alternative solutions that better respect the historic environment should be sought.
4.9.8 Benches

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 would provide a more pleasant experience for users. The two benches on Victoria Wharf and the ones just beyond Bell Wharf on the promenade leading east are more attractively located. The design of the benches is anonymous and neither contributes nor detracts from the character of the Area.

Any programme of enhancement in the Conservation Area should consider an improved design of bench in locations that have been made more attractive, possibly by some planting or public art to create a sense of place.

4.9.9 Overhead Cables

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.

4.9.10 Bins

As a town that receives a large number of visitors each year Leigh Old Town is provided with many rubbish bins. The style of these is rather ornate for the character of the Area and they are intrusive in the street scene. A more discreet
choice of design would improve this.

4.9.11 Bollards

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 and do not contribute anything to the appearance of the town.

4.9.12 Seaside Character

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.

The last two have the capacity to be problem spaces and require careful management.

4.9.13 Parking

Parking is clearly a problem in Leigh Old Town, as it is in any coastal settlement where there is only one road into it. A clear effort has been made to reduce parking within the Area for visitors, with considerable parking provision around Belton Bridge, which, while being unattractive, serves to protect the main part of the town from being swamped in parked cars. There are small public car parks within the main part of the High Street, one beside the Old Customs House and one on Victoria Wharf.
The Boatyard restaurant and the Sailing Club have their own private car parks, and several other small spaces are used for car parking including Strand Wharf and the small area in Alley Dock that does not have double yellow lines. Although it is recognised that parking is a necessity for the businesses and residents within the Area uncontrolled parking is unattractive and has a detrimental effect on the presentation of the town to visitors. Of the designated car parks, few of these have the benefit of sympathetic surfacing, boundary treatments or landscaping.

Left: Leigh Foundry Car Park, shabby boundary and resurfacing required
Right: uncontrolled parking on seating area between Peter Boat and The Coal Hole

Parking outside designated car parks detracts from the appearance of the town

4.9.14 Green spaces

Green spaces in the town are very few, particularly in the public realm. The most prominent green space is Sara’s tea garden, which is very attractive but in private ownership. There is some planting on The Strand but this is very untidy and requires maintenance and care. The scarcity of trees and green spaces are a part of the urban and industrial character of the Area so there is little scope for more planting of any significance.

There are many weeds that twine around the fence by the railway line, and these serve to mitigate the scar the railway leaves across many views around the town. 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.

Green spaces are much more important in views out of the Area, for example the views toward the West with Belton Hills and Two Tree island in the distance, and make an important contribution to its setting.
5. BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Contribution to Character

A map showing an assessment of the contribution of individual buildings to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area is shown in Fig. 9. Although to some extent this is a subjective judgment, it can be helpful to inform the planning process. Buildings have been graded on a scale of one to five according to the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative, buildings of no architectural quality detrimental to the character of the area, either by reason of mass, design, materials or siting. No buildings in Leigh Old Town Conservation Area have this designation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negative, buildings of indifferent design or detailing, or unsuited to the character of the conservation area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Buildings which have a neutral presence in the conservation area, fitting satisfactorily into it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Positive contribution through design, age, materials or detailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Positive, listed buildings or landmark buildings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsympathetic alterations or ‘improvements’ 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.
6.2 Building Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leigh-on-Sea Sailing Club</td>
<td>The sailing club is located in the old railway station, a fine mid-Victorian building of yellow stock bricks with red brick detailing around the windows, on the chimney and forming decorative string-courses, and some grey brickwork on the sloped entrance road. Although much about it is out of character for the Area, particularly its scale and sheer bulk, the quality of the design and the brickwork, its age, and the important part that the railway plays in the history of Leigh enable it to sit quite comfortably at the far end of the Conservation Area. It has a plain tile roof, which is unusual in the Area but works well with the building.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The style and material of the windows indicate that they are not original but they have been well-chosen in that the horizontal glazing bars are in line with the string course, continuing the line along the whole building through the brickwork and the windows. The brickwork arches above the windows are flat and have intricate keystones that tie into the string course above. The details of the building were clearly carefully thought out and contribute to its success.

The building has a much later addition on the roof at the eastern end and this is far less successful. It is flat roofed with white upvc, windows across its whole length. There is none of the Victorian attention to fine detail and the addition fails aesthetically as a result.

Beyond the east end of the building, there is storage for boats behind chain link fencing. This area, formerly the railway goods yard, is unsightly and appears temporary. In the summer when the boats are on their moorings the part of this fence is removed but a more appropriate boundary treatment would improve the presentation of the club and enhance the general appearance of the Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Lavatories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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; the walls are primarily yellow stock brickwork, partially covered in white paint. There is some dark blue painted shiplap on the recessed half of the gable, which is matched by the paintwork on the fascia boards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The building is successful because of the good choice of materials. However the unpainted metal doors, while hardwearing are overly utilitarian and their appearance could be improved by painting them.

This shared building is a former sail loft that sits alone on Victoria Wharf. It is rather boxy in shape but its styling and materials are generally sympathetic. Its slate roof and shallow pitch are typical of the Area and the feather-edged weatherboarding on the first floor above black painted brickwork are a visual indication of the physical separation of uses within the one building.

The fenestration and doors are successful. The windows are plain and practical but have enough detail to fit in with the majority of windows in the Area. The doors at ground level are simple double-hung doors that create a large inviting opening for customers but when closed are unobtrusive and look appropriately workmanlike. The doors on the 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 looks makeshift.

The signage for the fishermen’s co-op consists primarily 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 in white, which integrates well into the overall appearance of the building. The sign for the Pier and Foreshore division is more...
corporate in appearance and made of plastic. It lacks the charm of the other signage on the building and does not contribute to the character of the town. This is a bad example from an official source that should be leading the way in respecting the status of a conservation area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boatyard, Victoria Wharf</th>
<th>Small rendered building with pantiled roof and decorative finials that may, at one time, been used as a stable. Now mostly hidden behind tall wall to boatyard.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| The Den, High Street     | This is a huge charmless boxy building that dominates the whole of Victoria Wharf and is out of scale with the surrounding area. Other very large buildings in Old Leigh apart from the sailing club, which has its own architectural merit, are obscured by surrounding buildings. The Den stands alone and thus stands out.  

The roof of the building is covered in machine made clay pantiles, an unusual material in Leigh Old Town. They seem incongruous in such quantity and on such a plain roof. Corrugated sheet metal seems a more appropriate covering in this context. The walls on the first floor are black painted shiplap boarding, which is appropriate for a building on such an industrial scale. The first floor sits on a thick concrete slab and is cantilevered on the long edges over the yellow brick ground floor. This arrangement has the appearance of a very awkward upward extension to create space, and is dark and utilitarian underneath.  

The most positive aspect of this complex is the good choice of boundary treatment, a combination of brick walls and plain metal railings that are both |
permanent and appropriate for the character of the Conservation Area. The main gates have a very smart club emblem fixed to them, which is a stylish and distinctive identifier that others would do well to emulate.

This early 20th century building is currently in use as a small café/chip shop but it appears to have, at some time in the past been the post office, if the sign at the rear of the building can be relied on. It is of brick construction but this has, unfortunately, at some time been painted. The roof is the original slate and of the low pitch that is most commonly found in the Area.

Most of the windows are white timber vertical sashes with one vertical glazing bar at the centre. The exceptions to this are the shop front, which has a simple arrangement of two larger sash windows in the same style arranged around a central door and a ground floor window to the side at the front which is rectangular with an arrangement of glass three panes across, two high topped with alternating blue and yellow top-lights. This is a simple yet effective arrangement that adds interest to the elevation. The cills are painted red tiles.

The signage has been hand painted and is attractive and appropriate. The streetlight attached to the front of the building is attractive and a good solution to placement of lighting on such a narrow pavement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6, High Street</th>
<th>This building is the pair to no. 5 and is a sweet and souvenir shop. It is of similar appearance, and the canopy over the shop front is rather lively and gives a seaside atmosphere. Rear windows have been replaced with uPVC, which is inappropriate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Mayflower PH | The rear of 5-6 High Street has been recently extended to form a small public house that links through to the chippy at number 5. The wc facilities for the pub are located in the rear section of 6 High Street which has reduced the internal depth of the shop but this is not apparent from the street and has caused no harm to the conservation area.  
  
The extension itself is well proportioned and detailed including new double glazed sliding sash windows which have been well made and successfully manage to hide the double glazing unit.  
  
The yard to the rear is hard landscaped and contains a gazebo type temporary shelter which is rather unattractive. This area could be handled better (e.g. include some soft landscaping) which would enhance the setting of this part of the building and have a positive impact on the adjacent car parking.  
  
The hand painted pub sign is large but is attractively painted and is externally lit and does not detract from the success of the extension overall. |
<p>| 7, High Street, The Olde | This is a fine building with a lovely surviving front that is somewhat marred by excessive advertising in the windows that makes the building look |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smack</th>
<th>considerably less attractive than it should.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The roof, windows and doors are all of good</td>
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<td></td>
<td>materials and the painted walls do not look</td>
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<td></td>
<td>inappropriate. The pub front is a good</td>
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<td></td>
<td>arrangement of several doors, small arched</td>
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<td></td>
<td>windows and interesting joinery. The hanging</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sign is unusual and attractive and the main</td>
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<td>pub name sign sits well in its location. The</td>
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<td>lights are of traditional design and are fixed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to the wall with brackets that might look</td>
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<td>fussy in another location but are suitable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>here.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This is all let down by a confusion of chalk</td>
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<td>boards, fluorescent yellow paper notices in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the windows, the fabric advertising banner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>on the west elevation beside a gold painted</td>
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<td></td>
<td>amenity board, with the jumbrella and parasol</td>
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<td></td>
<td>all on the same side. These combine to overly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clutter the appearance of the building, which</td>
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<td>is already rather densely packed with features.</td>
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<td>It also serves to make the pub seem rather</td>
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<td>desperate for business.</td>
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<td>At the rear of the building there is a flat</td>
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<td>roofed two-storey extension in a completely</td>
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<td>different style and in front of that another</td>
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<td>single storey lean-to. These do not integrate</td>
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<td>well into the building or the character of the</td>
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<td>Area, and the greatest benefit of the</td>
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<td>jumbrella is that it blocks clear views of</td>
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| 8, High Street Boatyard Restaurant | This is a surprisingly well integrated development. The main part of the restaurant is a converted boatyard, to which has been added a huge glazed curtain wall at the front and a smart cobbled forecourt area. To the side and in front of this is a new building built in a traditional style which resembles a former building on this site ‘Junipers’. |
This part of the restaurant includes the staff quarters and kitchen area as well as a small exclusive dining area. This replica of a 16th century building obscures the size of the restaurant while replacing a much missed local landmark.

The main part of the restaurant is unashamedly industrial and uncompromisingly modern in appearance with corrugated iron roof and metal cladding on the front wall above a huge garage-style rolling door that acts as a shutter when the restaurant is closed. The side walls are of a pinky-yellow brick and these act as the proscenium arch for the stage-like restaurant frontage.

The rebuilt ‘Junipers’ has a steeply pitched plain tile roof and white feather-edged weather board walls, similar in appearance to the old building shown in photographs of the area. The main elements that betray its newness are the club-footed barge-boards on the gable ends and the neat square edges uncharacteristic of a building of traditional materials.

Most of the signs associated with the restaurant are very well handled and of good enough quality to be an asset to the appearance of the town. The exception is the ugly yellow banner that is stretched across the newly acquired car parking area opposite the restaurant.
This boat yard is almost invisible from the High Street. A sign is visible down the narrow alleyway that runs beside the Boatyard restaurant, and that is all. The sign itself is attractive and of interesting design. The building it is much more prominent from Strand Wharf, where it looms behind 2 and 3 Plumbs Yard, two locally listed 19th century cottages.

It is visible above and between 2 and 3 Plumbs Yard and then it carries on beyond 3 Plumbs Yard towards the sea wall. It is considerably taller than the two cottages, which cannot be viewed without the intrusion of the larger building. It is constructed of modern materials, with a very shallow roof of wide span construction, and horizontal metal cladding over a ground floor height brick wall that has mostly been covered in cement render.

Between the two diminutive cottages there is a large dominant sign for the builders yard and two service boxes. These would have been better located to the south side of 3 Plumbs Yard, which would have enabled the cottages to be viewed more easily as a pair without these unattractive intrusions.

This attractive little building was built in the 1860’s and was originally the town smithy. It still retains the appearance of a working building despite its conversion into the local heritage centre. It has done this by retaining the practical sliding double doors and its workshop windows on both floors. There is also a small access door to the right of the north elevation and a central service door on the first floor. The building itself is a small rectangular
brick building that has been rendered almost to shoulder height. It has a shallow slate roof with a chimney on the left side as you face the building. The windows and doors are painted in a very satisfactory matt dark green colour.

The rear of the heritage centre is far more modern in appearance. It is constructed of yellow stock bricks and has strong vertical detailing with vertical sections of brickwork, windows stacked on top of one another and a large area of shiplap boarding to the side and back. There is a link through to 2 Plumbs Yard.

This tiny cottage is linked to the Leigh heritage centre and is now open to the public as an example of a fisherman’s cottage. It is locally listed, along with its neighbour 3 Plumbs Yard. The cottage was rebuilt in 2006 after its partial collapse during refurbishment works.

This building is an excellent example of the materials that are appropriate to the character of Leigh Old Town. Its roof is orangey-red handmade plain tile with plain ridge tiles and an asymmetrical chimney set into the ridge. The walls are clad in black feather-edged weatherboard. Rainwater goods are in black cast iron. The windows are white painted timber vertical sliding sash windows with a pentice board detail supported on small brackets, which is matched by the doors.

The front door is set asymmetrically between the two windows and is constructed of plain boards painted white. Another door has been inserted in the first floor to the side facing no. 3 with a black
3, Plumbs Yard

This locally listed building is part of a pair with 2 Plumbs Yard, although it is subtly different from it, being used as a joinery workshop.

The slack pitched roof is covered in natural slate. The ridge tiles are plain red ceramic, similar to those on no. 2. No chimney survives on this roof, although it would undoubtedly originally have had one. Some of the tiles have slipped on the roof and should be repaired to avoid risk of damage to the roof caused by water ingress.

The black feather-edged weatherboard cladding is in need of maintenance and the windows require repair and repainting. The windows are vertical sash windows, six-pane, three over three. They have a similar pentice board detail to those on no. 2. The green boarded front door is placed centrally. Oddly below the first floor windows there are small window boxes, and there are also hanging baskets on the front wall at first floor level. These probably provide an attractive appearance when in flower although they are out of context in that location.

The gutter at roof level is painted an incongruous...
| 16, High Street, Strand Cafe, | bright blue, which is not detrimental. More inappropriate is a downpipe that runs almost horizontally across the front elevation. Considerable clutter surrounds the building including, on the day of the survey, a disused fridge-freezer, a large sheet of plywood and a large pile of Heras fencing. This type of untidiness is detrimental to the Area, although it is harder to object to the motorboat that was also there.

There is no boundary between the building and the public realm and this is entirely appropriate for the character of the Area. |

| | This little corner building is occupied by The Strand tea rooms. It is similar in style to 5 High Street, even as far as the feature window on the east wall, which is similar in shape, although lacking the subdivided top lights in coloured glass.

It is typical of the Area with slate roof, brick walls painted white and small paned sash timber windows. The entrance door is set into the corner, and is partially glazed. The shop-front projects forward slightly from the line of the original building and is roofed with slates. It is not unattractive, as the window area is subdivided, retaining a traditional appearance. On the rear portion of the west-facing wall there is a black feather-edged weatherboard section. There is a small banner type shop sign at the front, above the window and another to the side. This is small in size, which is good, but would be more appropriate if it were made of timber and sign-painted rather than made of plastic.

To the rear of the building there is a modern |
extension with a very slack roof and modern style timber windows. There is a small eating area to the rear of the building fenced off with overly ornate wrought iron railings with gold painted fleur-de-lys style arrowheads, which are out of context in a backyard.

The rainwater goods are plastic and are both prominent and unattractive.

Mike’s Boatyard occupies considerable space within Leigh Old Town although most of it is hidden behind the high walls that divide Alley Dock from Theobalds Wharf. The shop-front part of the business is located in 17-18 High Street, a muddle of buildings that has been extended and knocked together for the purpose.

The main part of the boatyard is a large black weatherboarded shed with the gable end facing towards the street and a catslide extension running along the west flank wall. This combination is fronted with a flat roofed extension bringing the shed forward to the building line of the High Street.

This acts as the shop-front and is a one-storey high cream-painted render front with two windows to the left of the main door and one to the right. This is topped with a banner sign with the business name on it. This shop-front is of reasonable design although the flat roof is inappropriate and detracts. The appearance of the building would be considerably improved if the joinery were painted to match other buildings in the street as varnished timber is not traditional and is out of character for the Conservation Area.
To the right of the building there is a yard with further access into the workshops and ugly temporary security fencing to prevent passers-by from using the private yard as a short cut between the High Street and Alley Dock.

The name signs for the building are hand-painted and are generally good. The main sign above the shop-front is particularly effective, and although the font is not one recommended for signage, the others have character and are distinctive.

Within the yard itself is a small brick and pantiled building that has been amalgamated with other incidental buildings within the boatyard. Mostly hidden from public view except for the north wall which forms part of the boundary to Alley Dock. This building may at one time have been used as a stable block for the horses used to pull wagonloads of goods from the wharves up the hill for distribution inland.

This terrace is remarkably well preserved with only three that have painted walls, few replaced doors and windows and no uPVC at all. The success of terraces relies heavily on their uniformity and how they work as a group. Any changes to this group at all should be very carefully considered as even minor ones could have a serious impact on its appearance. It would benefit the terrace as a whole if residents were encouraged to reverse the changes that have happened already, in particular the painting of the brickwork.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-20, High Street</td>
<td>19-20 High Street, known as Reginald Cottages, is a semi-detached pair. They are slightly taller than the rest of the terrace of which they form a part. The cottages have a slate roof, with their dividing wall projecting above the roofline finished with a small brick projecting bracket detail. Chimneys are located at either end of the building and act as a full-stop at each side. The walls are yellow stock brickwork. Lintels above windows and doors are stone, as is the little plaque that displays the name of the cottages. The timber sash windows and the doors appear to be original and match one another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21, High Street</td>
<td>This cottage has unfortunately had its brickwork painted a rather inappropriate lurid blue, but apart from that is relatively unchanged retaining roof, doors and windows that match the majority of the rest of the terrace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22, High Street</td>
<td>This cottage seems almost entirely unchanged and is an asset to the Area. It is possible that its windows have been replaced as none of the others in the terrace have vertical glazing bars dividing each sash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23, High Street</td>
<td>This cottage is little changed from the original, although the lintels appear to have been replaced and have been painted black, which contributes towards the erosion of the character of the terrace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24, High Street</td>
<td>Another well preserved cottage, with no obvious alterations at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 Theobalds Cottages</td>
<td>These three cottages were rebuilt after the fire that also destroyed the Peter Boat pub in 1892. They are designed to match the rest of the terrace. Two of the cottages have painted brickwork which does not enhance their appearance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Theobalds Cottages</td>
<td>This cottage has had several changes including white painted brickwork, false shutters on the windows and black painted window frames and a replacement front door. A candelabra style outside light has also been fixed to the wall beside the door. These changes are the most comprehensive that any of these cottages has undergone and they have an adverse effect on the appearance of the terrace as a whole.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Theobalds Cottages</td>
<td>Again this cottage has been painted white and its window frames have been painted black. Reversing these changes would help restore the unity of the terrace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Theobalds Cottages</td>
<td>This is the least altered of the three rebuilt cottages, with its brickwork still exposed and white window frames. Any changes have been subtle and this cottage remains an asset to the terrace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27, High Street, The Peter Boat</td>
<td>The Peter Boat was rebuilt after it was destroyed by fire in 1892. A large building originally, it has sprawled considerably to create a very substantial public house, which for the most part fits well into the Area. The construction materials are typical of the Area, although the brickwork, in common with several other buildings, has been painted cream. The joinery on the windows of the main part of the building is very fine and set off by the beautiful</td>
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glazing. The lower half of the ground floor sash windows is leaded, and glazed with obscure glass. The central pane bears the name of the brewery Mann Crossman and Paulin Ltd and several also display the logo of a knight on a rearing horse on a red background.

There is a flat roofed extension to the west elevation. This is well maintained and its roof is covered with pots of flowers, which improve its appearance. Notwithstanding this and the shiplap boarding, which is clearly an attempt to soften the effect of the building, the elongated shape and flat roof are not a positive feature.

The appearance of the building is not enhanced by the fake timbers that decorate its exterior.

A diminutive flat roofed shed. White painted shiplap boarding is appropriate for its industrial-type use. The roof is felted, which is not an appropriate material for the Area. Corrugated iron is more suitable. Signage is timber and hand painted and is appropriate and attractive.

These two buildings are linked behind the town’s former water source, which is arranged as a memorial behind a gate. They are used as the scout house for the 4th and 6th Leigh Sea Scouts group. They are little changed in appearance. Maintenance is required to the roof, window frames and the paintwork on the front wall of no. 35.

Slate walls, stock brickwork and white painted sash windows are all typical of the Area. No 36 has a decorative terracotta tiled band at first floor level and an oriel window above it giving the
<table>
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<th>37, High Street</th>
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<td>A building of unusual appearance within the Area at the corner of Billet Wharf and High Street. The front elevation is dominated by a huge artificial slate gambrel roof with three dormer windows hooded with an extension of the roof above and a pentice board supported on a moulded bracket. The lead flashing has become detached and the windows may be vulnerable to water ingress as a result. The ground floor and the whole gable wall are covered in white feather-edged weatherboarding above a brick plinth. The weatherboarding requires painting. The door and the window frames on the ground floor are painted dark green, although the ones in the roof are white. The front door is sheltered by a small lean-to roof covered with slates. There is a roller garage door on the front elevation. A more appropriate choice would have been hinged double doors.</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>39, High Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Osborne Bros, Billet Wharf</td>
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The building is less successful when viewed from the west side. The corrugated iron roof is not clearly visible from this side so there is nothing to soften the rather plain shiplap boarded elevation apart from a small pitched roof over the doors. The doors have a stained-timber finish which is out of context in the location and should instead be painted. The only window on that elevation is uPVC and at a high level, which is particularly inappropriate on a building that effectively forms a gateway to the conservation area and is opposite a listed building.

The Crooked Billet is reputed to have been built in the 16th century and is one of two listed buildings in the Conservation Area. A steeply pitched roof covered in replacement machine-made tiles is embellished by a decorative triple flue chimney stack. The walls are covered in yellow painted feather-edged weatherboard above yellow painted brickwork on the west gable wall. The weatherboarding is in need of some repair in places. On the principal elevation the walls are rendered and painted yellow and on the east elevation the render is painted white. A small single storey pitched roof extension to the east side is covered with a corrugated iron roof and is rendered and painted to match the main building.

Most windows are timber framed, white painted sash windows, some of which require maintenance. Three bay windows are arranged to the right hand side of the principal elevation, two on the gable wall and one to the left of the main steps and door. Advertising signs are relatively moderate but the façade is cluttered with cables.
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<tr>
<td>52 High Street, Chalkwell Bay Sea Scouts, Scout Hall</td>
<td>This converted former fishermen’s church which seems rather at odds with the building style of the area. The weatherboarding and windows are appropriate, but the projecting elements above the windows and doors are unusual and may at one time have been glazed. Its high position on a concrete plinth makes it overly dominant in the streetscape.</td>
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<tr>
<td>53-58, High Street</td>
<td>This modern infill terrace at 53-58 High Street is moderately successful. It has taken several elements from surrounding buildings and integrated them. The scale of the buildings is appropriate and the main construction material is yellow stock bricks, matching many other buildings in the street. Red brick decorative detail is also inspired by neighbouring buildings. The façade also included an area of shiplap weather boarding, feather edged weather boarding would have been more appropriate on this domestic building. The roof is slate, which is appropriate for the Area. But the design of the façade is let down by the rather bland overall design and fenestration proportions and designs which are not of comparable quality to the traditional buildings in the conservation area. A square-topped carriage arch gives access to amenity space located at the rear, eliminating this from the front, where it would have been inappropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59-60, High Street</td>
<td>This pair of semi detached cottages is one of several similar pairs of cottages in the Conservation Area. These are relatively well</td>
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preserved although repointing to the brickwork of both has disrupted the cohesion between the two. The overall design is simple with a pitched slate roof and chimneys at either end. The size of the chimney to the left, combined with an odd extension to the brickwork on the front façade and hanging slates on the gable suggest that this was once a longer terrace of which only these two remain. The walls are primarily yellow stock bricks with red brick string course and arches over the doors and windows. Original windows survive but not the doors, although does not detract substantially from their positive contribution.

61, High Street, Old Leigh Studios, Former industrial building, once the works of Southend Marine Engineering. Low pitch corrugated iron roof. The three small round windows with red brickwork, decorative leadwork and coloured panels contrast with the utilitarian character of the building. A large central opening houses the double front doors that are set into glazed panelling, with steps up to access them. The brickwork has been painted white and this combined with green painted bargeboards give a colourful, if not entirely integrated, appearance. The bargeboards need maintenance. The roof has probably been lowered at some point and the building extended to the right so that the apex of the roof is no longer directly above the doors and central roundel, giving a lopsided appearance. Despite this asymmetry the building remains a positive feature.
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<tr>
<td>62-63, High Street</td>
<td>Pair of 16(^{th}) century timber-framed cottages, the only other listed buildings in Leigh Old Town apart from The Crooked Billet. Lobby-entry plan, with old spiral staircases behind the stack. The slate roof, brickwork, weatherboarding and windows are all typical of the area although the steeply pitched roof and dormer windows are unusual and an indication of their exceptional age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara's Tea Garden</td>
<td>This is a charming establishment where the buildings are less eye-catching than the planting. Here is the only tree in the main part of the Conservation Area. The buildings themselves are simple white painted weather-boarded sheds with flat roofs. The garden is bounded by a low picket fence and is filled with attractive planting. The relatively large garden space is out of character for the area but is a positive feature through the quality of its design and excellent standard of maintenance. Advertising and signage is moderate and unobtrusive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>64-65, High Street</td>
<td>This is another pair of cottages typical to the Conservation Area, small in scale and relatively plain. They are considerably more altered than 62-63 High Street. The brickwork has been painted white and 64 has had shutters applied. No. 65 has retained its decorative red brick window arch on the ground floor, which suggests that the brickwork beneath the paint may be similar to that of 61-62. The sash windows have black painted timber frames and appear original, as do the solid timber doors. Both have miniscule areas to the front that are fenced off from the road, no. 65 with a low white painted picket fence that integrates...</td>
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<td>66, High Street, Lynn Tait Gallery,</td>
<td>more successfully than that of 64 due to the white picket fencing that forms the boundary to Sara’s Tea Garden.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This building, once the old foundry but now much altered, is still an attractive feature in the street. It consists of three ranges, each with their gable facing onto the street. Slate roof, yellow stock brickwork and red brick details are all typical of the town. The large window frames are painted red and lend a cheerful appearance to the façade. The central bay has a recessed wall and the roof above is supported on attractive candy-twist columns (which are not original to the building). The two bays to the right of the façade are glazed, the glass subdivided by heavy timber glazing bars, painted to match the window frames. Signage, though large is attractively designed and integrates well into the design of the building on the whole. The garden to the side is bounded by iron railings, painted dark red-brown, which are a little too ornate in design. The garden itself is unusually large compared to other properties in the conservation area and has not been exploited to its fullest potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-74a, High Street,</td>
<td>This is the old Customs House, built in 1815 and locally listed. The palette of local materials is employed, with a slate roof, stock brickwork, sash windows and large central double doors painted blue with an over-door glazing panel and timber lintel. The windows have gauged brick arches although those on the first floor have been rendered. The roof-lights, though visible, are</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds, High Street,</td>
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</table>
| 1  | Simply Seafood,          | Occupied by Simply Seafood. Black painted shiplap boarding and heavily glazed along most of the eastern façade. This has the appearance more of a restaurant than a cockle shed. It appears to recently have been extended to the south with a large outdoor eating area also included. The roof of the new building has been covered with ugly black polymer tiles whereas the older part of the shed is roofed with corrugated sheeting which is much more appropriate for the Area. The design is somewhat awkward, especially the return at the southern end, which is insufficiently articulated and the eaves of which are too high.
<p>|    |                          | The premises have considerable amenity value but the design is out of keeping with the rest of the cockle sheds. |
| 2  | simply Seafood,          | A shed very similar to how no. 1 would have appeared before it was extended. Corrugated roof, green painted shiplap boarding, no signage. |
| 3  | W H Osborne              | A flat roofed shed with black painted boarding and attractive hand painted business sign. An example of how the cockle sheds used to look, as they had monopitch roofs from the early days up until about the 1970s. |
| 4  | F A Emery                | These two cockle sheds are flat roofed, of modern square-profiled corrugated metal and green painted flat timber walls. The hand painted sign is full of character and very attractive with excellent... |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>6 Cockle Sheds, Estuary Fish Merchants</td>
<td>Flat roof and colour-stained timber weather boarding, which is in need of some maintenance although the lack of shiny plastic paint is refreshing and attractive. Double doors set flush into the shed with no door surround. The hand painted sign is very attractive but requires repainting to prevent deterioration. The choice of lettering is very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a Cockle Shed, Endeavour Marine Engineering</td>
<td>This diminutive shed is faced with shiplap boarding on the front elevation although the side walls have concrete render on them. The flat roof is hidden by the fascia board that probably once bore a business name sign although the present one is lower down between the two windows, which are shuttered with shiplap panels. The sign itself is discreet and attractive although in this context it should be relocated to the fascia where a space already exists. The dark green paint has a matt appearance that is attractive in comparison to the shiny plastic paints that most of the sheds are coated with. The white painted metal security outer grille door is conspicuous. A darker colour would reduce its impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Cockle Sheds Osborne and sons (Shellfish) Ltd</td>
<td>Pitched roof covered with corrugated sheeting, green gloss painted shiplap weather board, large galvanised roller up and over door and small personnel door to the left. The simple sign above the doors is not dominant although the hand painted signs on other cockle sheds have far more character and are more appropriate. The sign should be timber since plastic lacks character and quality. However the building is of appropriate</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds Estuary Fish Merchants&lt;br&gt;Flat roofed, bright green shiplap boarding. There is a stall integrated into the front of the building, which is low-key and lends vibrancy to the row as does the green canvas canopy. The fascia sign is of appropriate scale but the plastic is inappropriate as is the unpainted metal edging. A hand-painted timber sign would have been more appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds Osborne and sons (Shellfish) Ltd&lt;br&gt;A flat roofed building but otherwise not dissimilar from the Osborne and sons shed at no. 7 with similar gloss paint and plastic sign. Despite these inappropriate details the scale and good level of maintenance of the building mean that they do not detract significantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds&lt;br&gt;Well maintained, painted to match no. 9, no 11 has a pitched roof that integrates well into the street scene. Lack of signage gives a bland appearance that could be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds, Thameside Shellfish co. Ltd&lt;br&gt;Black painted shiplap walls, flat roof. Traditional timber sign central above front door. Good state of repair overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds, Deal Bros&lt;br&gt;Very low pitched roof with square profile corrugated metal sheet roof, green painted shiplap walls with a matt finish. Attractive timber sign painted dark red with hand painted lettering and decoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cockle Sheds Estuary Fish Merchants&lt;br&gt;Very plain unmarked shed in good state of repair. The west wall is covered in hazard signage, which does not enhance its appearance. The up and over roller door was covered in graffiti on the day of the survey giving a neglected appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hut adjacent to Cockle Sheds (west end)</td>
<td>Small shed style building cantilevered over the foreshore used for recreational purposes. The green shiplap boarding fits in nicely with the cocklesheds but the white upvc windows and felt roof are inappropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Thames Marine and Johnson and Jogo ltd, High Street</td>
<td>Large industrial sheds and associated boatyards. Significantly larger and more exposed than the other boatyards within the main part of the conservation area. Overall these buildings and the associated clutter are not attractive and do detract from the charm of the area but they are part of the industrial landscape and therefore not entirely out of context. Rationalising the surrounding machinery and scrap metal would make a significant improvement to this area.</td>
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6. MANAGEMENT PLAN

The management of Leigh Old Town Conservation Area requires a careful approach balanced between two sometimes conflicting needs, to retain and enhance the special historic character and attractiveness of the Area, while encouraging the industrial uses that are the lifeblood of the village and an importance source of its vibrancy.

6.1 Problems and Pressures

6.1.1 Requirements of modern businesses
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, cheap and ugly additions to buildings and inappropriate boundary treatments among other problems.

6.1.2 Inappropriate improvements to buildings and over modernisation
There has been little encroachment of plastic windows and doors into the area, but continual vigilance is required to ensure this remains the case. Some buildings have suffered erosion of character in other ways, such as the painting of brickwork, which has occurred to some cottages, and flat roofed extensions.

Over-modernisation has led to a significant loss of character. This has particularly happened to the cockle-sheds around the Area where the plasticized paints in use on the cladding have led to a shiny plastic appearance, which conflicts with the original rustic appearance of the sheds.

6.1.3 Boundary treatments
Inappropriate boundary treatments are evident in the Area. The most prominent are:

- The railway fence that runs along the entire north boundary of the Conservation Area.
- The several privately owned spaces bounded by chain link fences, mainly used for storage of small boats: examples of these include the boats stored beside The Coal Hole and the boats stored by the Sailing Club.
- Most of the fences that form the boundary along Alley Dock.

6.1.4 Parking
Parking presents a major problem despite considerable efforts to provide adequate and affordably priced car parks nearby around Belton Bridge. Some car parks are poorly maintained and unattractive. Many cars are parked outside the designated car parks, along Alley Dock, on Plumbs Yard and on the various wharf areas, which detracts considerably from the appearance of these spaces.

6.1.5 Condition and maintenance
Maintenance of the public realm could be significantly improved. Roads and paths are heavily patched in places, street furniture is frequently ill-chosen and in poor repair, particularly the street lights east of Belton Bridge. Unsatisfactory boundary
treatments look worse when in poor condition and shabby. The few green spaces in the Area seem to be barely maintained including the several small planting areas, particularly on Plumbs Yard and the area at the base of Belton Bridge near the seats and the roundabout.

6.1.6 Tourism
The number of tourists visiting in fine weather puts pressure on the town in the same way as it does in most resorts. This has an impact on car parking and traffic levels as well as pubs and cafes which must stretch to accommodate these.

6.2 Policy
The existing conservation policies and guidance in the Borough Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework together with the Article 4 direction (section 3.4, above) are adequate to provide the basis for development control, when planning permission or listed building consent is necessary. They are supported by government guidance in the form of PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.

6.3 Information and Advice
Guidance for residents and owners is published in leaflets which together comprise ‘Conservation: A Residents’ Guide’. The relevant leaflets were distributed to each property when published in 2000 and are provided on request to new owners. The leaflets are on the council’s website. They are in the process of being updated following completion of each character appraisal and will subsequently be distributed to each property. We suggest that these should be sent out periodically to all residents to accommodate changes in ownership.

Advice on the design of proposed development in the Conservation Area continues to be available on request.

6.4 Additional Controls
Most of the Conservation Area is covered by Leigh Old Town Article 4 Direction. This withdraws permitted development rights as outlined fully in section 3.4 Designations. The Article 4 Direction does not cover the whole Area, as shown on the map in section 3.4, and some inappropriate development has begun to occur in these locations. The direction should be extended to prevent further erosion of character.

The two listed buildings enjoy statutory protection. The local listing of four buildings highlights their importance in the Conservation Area and would be a material consideration in determining applications, but the Local List is advisory only and does not give the council additional powers.

6.5 Individual Buildings
Proposals for alterations and additions to buildings in the Conservation Area will take account of the council’s policies for conservation areas and also of this appraisal and its management proposals. The reinstatement of original features of each building and the enhancement of the area will be encouraged.

The borough operates a limited discretionary grant scheme for repairs or reinstatement of windows. Housing renewal grants, which are designed to improve
a building’s fitness for human habitation, are also occasionally available. Since
there is little need for reinstatement of appropriate windows in the Conservation
Area, redirection of some grant funding towards the replacement of inappropriate
boundary treatments should be considered as an incentive to improve them.

6.6 Monitoring and Review
Monitoring the Conservation Area is necessary to check on the general condition
and maintenance, to ensure unauthorised development has not taken place, to
update photographic records and to determine whether any further measures are
needed to safeguard or enhance the Area.

It is proposed that a programme of regular monitoring should be developed,
combined with photographic surveys, which would provide an early warning of
management issues before excessive deterioration can take place.

6.7 Enforcement
Active use of existing Council Policies will be important to ensure that the
appropriate controls for Conservation Areas are applied and enforced. However
enforcement of planning controls, should unauthorised development take place, is
necessary to secure appropriate restoration or change. This should continue to be
carried out as necessary.

6.8 Boundary Proposals
The Conservation Area boundaries follow logical topographical features. There are
no proposals for the boundary to be extended in any direction.

6.9 Enhancements
Leigh Old Town would benefit from an enhancement programme that would
improve the appearance of the Conservation Area without compromising its
character as a working port.

6.9.1 Public realm
Several areas of enhancement are proposed for Leigh Old Town

Street furniture
Much of the existing street furniture does not flatter the Area, and that which does
is in need of maintenance. The street-lighting columns are mostly attractive and
should be repaired and painted. The benches and waste bins are of a bland
municipal style and should be replaced with simple alternatives that are more
suited to the Area and will help to reinforce the sense of place and characterful
appearance of the Area.

Paving and surfacing
The Conservation Area would benefit from a carefully designed paving scheme. The
tarmac in pedestrian areas should be replaced with good quality concrete slabs or
granite setts, whilst the granite sett surface should be extended along the full
length of the High Street.
Signage
In areas where signage creates clutter or is excessive this should be rationalised and reduced. Repetition should be avoided. Where more than one sign can use the same post without confusion this should be favoured.

Car parks
Simple planting schemes would help soften the appearance of the car parks. All parking areas would benefit from improved maintenance and care. The surfacing of the Leigh Foundry and the Belton Bridge car parks would benefit from sympathetic replacement. The surfacing of Victoria Wharf car park, however, is not inappropriate.

Measures to prevent cars from being parked outside designated car-parks would considerably enhance the appearance of the Area.

Boundary treatments
The proliferation of poor boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area has a negative effect on its appearance. This is a problem which is in serious need of attention

Belton Bridge
The area below Belton Bridge could be considered as a location for some form of landscaping scheme or public art and a specific enhancement scheme to reduce the oppressive effect of the grey concrete bridge.

Ideas could include planting, lighting schemes, interesting paving or a creative display of publicity bills for local events.

6.9.2 Planting and trees
The existing planted areas would benefit from improved maintenance and care. Planting by the railway line should be considered to soften its appearance in views.

6.9.3 Buildings
Applications for development or change within the Area should be considered in the light of this Appraisal and existing guidance on good practice. Any development must be carefully designed to ensure it will not further erode the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. A tightly built-up place with a well defined character such as Old Leigh most readily accommodates traditional design. Modern design can fit more easily into an industrial context, as the Boatyard Restaurant shows.

Reinstatement of original features must be encouraged as part of the development control process to help reverse the negative impact that some unsuitable development has had in the Area.

6.9.4 Advertising
Advertising needs to be carefully controlled in both quantity and style. It must be of materials, design and size appropriate for the Conservation Area and must be controlled so that it does not create clutter.
6.10 Key Characteristics to Inform New Development

There are no obvious infill spaces in the town. All available undeveloped space is used for storage or car parking. There are also few buildings that are ripe for redevelopment. It is likely that development is likely to take the form of extensions or alterations. The guidelines below are intended to assist with this.

Form
The majority of buildings take a terrace form even if they are not always grouped in terraces. They are generally arranged facing the High Street in typical town street pattern. Most domestic buildings are rectangular, two storeys high with a shallow pitched roof. The cockle sheds are one-storey buildings with very shallow pitched or flat roofs, rectangular in plan without embellishment.

Scale
Most buildings in the Area are built on a domestic scale. They tend to be only two storeys in height, and few have accommodation within the roof space. Storey heights are relatively low. The cockle sheds are related to one another by their similar heights and their regular layout along the road, a pattern that should be respected.

Details
Details on buildings are understated and mostly discreet. This overall simplicity is an important aspect of the appearance of the town. There are a few crested ridges and occasionally coloured glass can be seen. Dormers and roof-lights are rare. Windows and doors are usually plain and brickwork is simple and rarely decorative apart from the occasional band of coloured bricks.

Facades 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.

Materials
The materials chosen for development within the Area should be inspired by those already commonly found there.

Roof materials on older buildings are hand-made clay plain tiles, but on the majority of buildings natural slate is the primary material, a result of the shallow pitches of these roofs. Industrial type buildings, such as cockle sheds, are often roofed with corrugated sheet metal, an important material for their character.

Feather-edged weather boarding and shiplap boarding are both commonly used in the Area. There is a broad distinction in the locations where they are used. Shiplap boarding is more commonly used on industrial buildings but for other kinds of buildings, such as dwellings and public houses, feather-edged weatherboarding is more appropriate.

The most commonly used material for walls apart from weatherboarding is brick, usually yellow stock bricks. In some cases this has been painted; this is not an appropriate finish.

Windows are usually white painted sliding sashes; doors are timber, often solid and unglazed, but as frequently with small glass panes. Coloured glass is occasionally...
found. Most cockle sheds have few windows, and they are small and simple. They often have double doors to facilitate movement of large crates of seafood.

Picket fences, usually white painted, basic horizontal functional railings and walls have been identified as characteristic of the Conservation Area. Simple good quality railings would also be appropriate in some places. Along Alley Dock fences should have timber vertical boards.

**Spaces**

The Conservation Area is typically densely built-up. The few vacant spaces, used for wharves and industrial purposes or car parking, tend to be unkempt and would benefit from better landscaping and maintenance to make them feel more welcoming. When occupied the two large seating areas feel lively and are attractive spaces, but it is important the furniture, signage and landscaping of these places is of good quality and well maintained.

**Priorities**

Of the proposals identified, those that would have the most impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area are:

- Road and pavement surfacing.
- Boundary treatments.
- Removal of paint from brick facades.

**6.11 Implementation**

The Appraisal and its management proposals has been referred to the Council’s Conservation Working Party. They will subsequently be subject to planning consultation, including a public meeting as required under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. Resources will be an obstacle to the implementation of the management proposals and funding will need to be identified to take them forward.
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APPENDIX

Maps of the Conservation Area

Designations within the Conservation Area
Uses of buildings
Townscape Analysis
Construction dates
Character zones within the Conservation Area
Contribution of buildings to character