THE HIGH STREET

The High Street fronting the Garrison entrance was developed during the second half of the nineteenth century in response to the Garrison and the extension of the railway to Shoebury.

The broad High Street was developed piecemeal with no overall design control. Originally a mix of houses and shops, it shows a variety of Victorian designs. Despite conversion of some of the shops to housing, buildings retain much of their Victorian character. Features of particular importance are the original timber sliding sash windows, slate roofs, parapet and cornice detailing and original shopfronts.

The terrace of houses on the west side of the High Street (nos. 9-25) are of varied designs but their typical late Victorian detailing such as recessed porches, bays, timber sliding sash windows and slate roofs give them visual unity.

The Shoeburyness Hotel is at the entrance to the Garrison. Built in an Arts and Crafts style it became a training base for boxers attached to the Garrison, such as Bombadier Wells.

DEVELOPMENT & CONSENTS

Closure of the Garrison, presents great potential for regeneration. Proposals for the area will be guided by the Shoebury Garrison Planning Brief which is available at all Libraries and the Civic Centre and will include the repair of its historic buildings.

All development in the Conservation Area should also follow the advice in the Conservation Area Guidance leaflet and, in particular, respect the features outlined above which contribute to its special character. Note that Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent may be needed.

ADVICE AND CONTACTS

Officers from the Technical Services Department are always available to offer practical and technical advice on conservation and the need for consent. Contacts and sources of further information are given in a separate conservation leaflet.

INTRODUCTION

Part of Shoebury Garrison and the adjacent High Street were designated a Conservation Area in 1981 because they have special architectural and historic interest and a unique character which needs to be preserved and enhanced.

This leaflet describes the main features that give the Conservation Area its special interest. It is one of a series of leaflets forming the Council’s Conservation Guide and should be read, in particular, with the Conservation Area Guidance leaflet. Together, these leaflets will help residents make informed decisions about development at their properties and so, help to preserve and enhance Shoebury Garrison’s special character.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Shoebury’s position at the mouth of the Thames estuary has given it strategic importance since prehistoric times and as a result it has had a long association with military activity.

Archaeological evidence suggests that ramparts in the present Garrison protected an Iron Age settlement. Originally, the ramparts were 40ft wide and 12ft high and possibly formed a semi-circle which was open to the sea. Parts of these ramparts survive, and with the area of the settlement, are now protected as a scheduled ancient monument within the Conservation Area.

The Romans also built a fortified settlement at the Ness, known as Essobira which was attacked by the British in AD50 under Caractacus, son of the last British King, and later by Boadicea’s rebels. It is thought to have survived in some form into the 4th century. In the 6th century, Saxon invaders re-established a settlement at Shoebury called Scoeybyrig (the town in the “shaw” or wood).

Shoebury later became a base for the Danes who sought to overrun the Saxon kingdom. In 894AD, after defeat by King Alfred in the Battle of Benfleet, the Danish forces retreated to Shoeburyness. The Danes may well have made use of the earlier Iron Age ramparts for protection.
The origins of the present Garrison go back to Napoleonic times when the country was again threatened by invasion. Continually seeking improvements in weaponry, the Royal Artillery from Woolwich started to use the Ness for experimental and practice firing.

After periodic use, the Royal Artillery established permanent experimental ranges at Shoebury in 1849 on land purchased from Dale Knapping, Lord of the Manor. A School of Gunnery was added ten years later. It was during this period that the Garrison was mainly developed, including the hospital, gatehouse and clocktower in 1856, the gunnery drill shed in 1859, and Horseshoe Barracks in the 1860s.

The Garrison had a further link with Napoleonic times when the Prince Imperial of France, great grandson of Napoleon, was stationed there as an officer. He was later killed in the Zulu War.

Artillery training and experimental use of guns, rockets and explosives, continued to grow and the New Ranges extending to Foulness were added to the Garrison in 1889. Despite the dangers, the Garrison had relatively few accidental explosions. The worst, in 1885, killed seven soldiers and brought a sense of tragedy to the whole district.

The Garrison’s development had a profound impact on Shoebury and transformed it from a small scattered rural community with a population in 1851 of only 350, into a Garrison town. Rapid population growth and housing development took place around the Garrison and many residents were dependent on it for their livelihoods. The railway was extended to Shoebury in 1884 to serve the Garrison and this stimulated further development in the High Street area.

The Garrison remained in military use until the 1980’s. Following a long period of disuse, it is to be converted to new uses and its historic buildings restored.

SHOE BURY GARRISON’S SPECIAL INTEREST

The Conservation Area has two distinct sections. It is centered on the Garrison’s barracks and associated accommodation. It also includes part of the High Street which provides a suitable Victorian setting for the entrance to the Garrison.

Its history and archaeology give it national significance. It also has considerable architectural interest with its unique horseshoe barrack design and a range of buildings typical of Victorian military architecture. Many of the Garrison’s buildings are listed buildings and have special architectural or historic interest in their own right (see the Listed Buildings conservation leaflet).

THE BARRACKS

The character of the Barracks is very special. Its architecture and layout remain largely as originally designed. Well spread out buildings, wide tree lined roads, open spaces and sea views give a feeling of space. Many mature trees within the Garrison enhance the setting of the buildings and positively contribute to the Conservation Area’s character.

Most of the buildings date from the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Their materials and common design elements give the area a unified appearance - yellow stock brick, slate roofs, timber sliding sash window. But distinct variations in building design, their position, size and decorative detailing, reflect the different status of the users. Compare Horseshoe Barracks, for instance, which have the simplest designs and provided accommodation for private soldiers, with the well-detailed married officers quarters in The Terrace.