

Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Client:
Braintree District Council

Approved:
August 2023



Essex County Council



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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary

Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area comprises the retail core of the town and small areas of surrounding residential development. Braintree has a long history, which is reflected in its building stock. Throughout the Conservation Area there are fine examples of domestic, industrial and commercial buildings ranging from the medieval period to the present day.

Through the town's built heritage, it is possible to chart the fortunes of the town, from a medieval market town to an important hub for textile manufacture in the nineteenth century and onto its development into the town as we view it today. Benefactors, changing fortunes and trends have left an important mark upon the fabric of the townscape, which gives Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area an attractive, varied and interesting appearance.

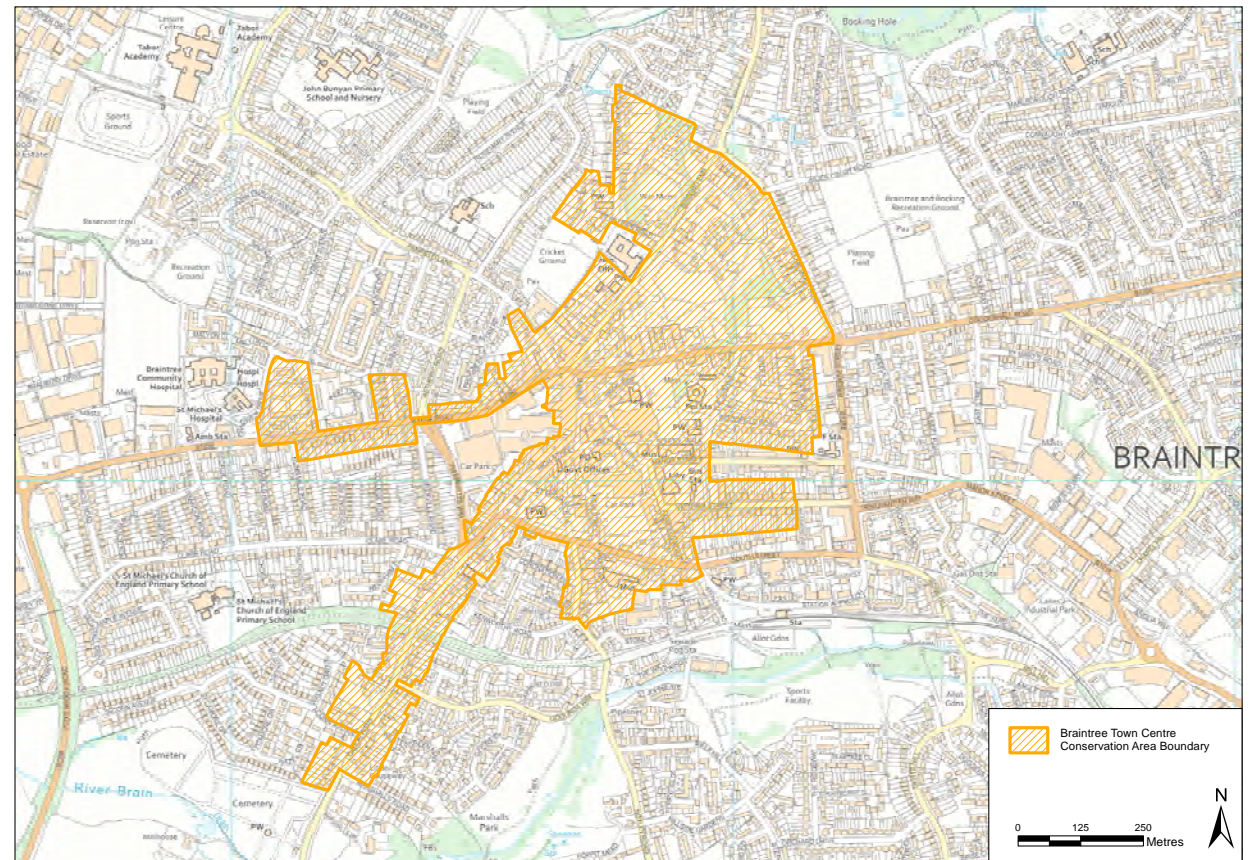


Figure 1 Map of the Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area



1.2 Conserving Braintree's Heritage

Braintree Conservation Area was designated on the 19th June 1969. This boundary included the town centre, extending south along London Road and north along Bradford Street, extending upwards to include the southernmost section on Broad Road.

No Conservation Area Appraisal document has been produced since the designation of the area; the boundary of the Conservation Area was reassessed in 1979 but no details of any appraisal remain. Braintree District Council appointed Place Services to complete the first appraisal document for the Conservation Area, and reassess its boundary and significance.

As part of the initial assessment of the 1969 Braintree Conservation Area boundary, it became clear that the Conservation Area had two very distinct areas which were worthy of individual Conservation Area status: the Town Centre and the northern part of the town, Bradford Street.

The proposal to divide the former Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area into two separate designated areas was agreed in principal by Braintree District Council in August 2020. The contrast in character and historic development between the town centre and the wealth of historic buildings along Bradford Street means that the Bradford Street area is of sufficient historic and architectural special interest for Conservation Area designation in its own right.

This document forms the appraisal for the new Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area, which encompasses the commercial centre of the town and small areas of historic, residential development which emanate from the town's centre.

The document is provided as baseline information for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development in Braintree.

This report provides an assessment of the historic development and character of Braintree Town Centre and outlines its special interest. The appraisal will also consider the significance of heritage assets and the contribution that these, along with their setting, make to the character of the area. The understanding of significance will be used to assess the susceptibility of the Character Areas to change, highlighting key assets of importance.

This assessment will consider how Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area developed, analysing the conservation area's building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities can be used to assess the key characteristics of each area, highlighting potential impacts future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the overall character of Bradford Street. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and an analysis of the individual character areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) highlights good design as one of twelve core principals of sustainable development. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context, the immediate and larger character of the area in which new development is sited.

This assessment follows best practice guidance, including Historic England's revised Historic England Advice Note 1 for Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019) and The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017).

1.3 Purpose of Appraisal

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

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

This appraisal will enhance understanding of Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area and its development, informing future design. Applications that demonstrate an understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce appropriate design and positive outcomes for agents and their clients. It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance outlined in the bibliography.



Figure 2 Braintree High Street, looking south



1.4 Planning Policy Context

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

In particular Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas, and Section 72 requires that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced.

Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposal for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in Part 16 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment) of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, the NPPF (February 2021).

Bradford Street Conservation Area, which is the subject of this appraisal, is located within the area covered by Braintree District Council. Local planning policy is set out in the Braintree Development Plan. The Braintree Local Plan 2033 is located within the area covered by Braintree District Council. Local planning policy is set out in the Braintree Development Plan. The Braintree Local Plan 2033 is in two parts: **Part 1** which contains strategic policies also covering Colchester City and Tendring Councils and **Part 2** which relates to Braintree District only.

The New Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2017 and adopted by the Council in July 2022.

Relevant Policies within the Braintree District Local Plan are:

- SP 7 Place Shaping Principles
- LPP 52 – Layout and design of development
- LPP 53 – Conservation Areas
- LPP 54 - Demolition in Conservation Areas
- LPP 55 – Shop fronts, fascias and signs in Conservation Areas
- LPP 56 – Illuminated signs in Conservation Areas
- LPP 57 – Heritage Assets and their setting
- LPP 58 – Demolition of Listed Buildings or structures
- LPP 63 – Archaeological Evaluation Excavation and Recording
- LPP 62 – Cemeteries and churchyards
- LPP 65 – Tree protection

The latest policy position and Development Plan Documents can be found in the Planning Policy section of the Council's website: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/planning-building-control>.



2. Context and Character

Braintree is the principal town in the Braintree District in the north of Essex. It is located 10 miles northeast of Chelmsford, and 15 miles west of Colchester. The Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area encompasses the core of the town, which developed close to the River Brain, outside of the Conservation Area's southern boundary. The River Blackwater is to the north of the Conservation Area, flowing through Bocking and the Bradford Street Conservation Area.

The topography of the Conservation Area is largely flat, with the centre of the Conservation Area, the marketplace, located at the highest point. There is a gradual sloping downwards toward the basin of the River Brain in the southern section of the Conservation Area, which is most notable on London Road and Notley Road. From this the landscape rises on Rifle Hill, outside of the Conservation Area, affording wide views of the town's landmarks, in particular the New Mill complex and the water towers. A further fall in land level occurs in the north eastern section of the Conservation Area, toward Bradford Street, Bocking and the River Blackwater. Braintree developed around the crossing of two routes across the county, north-south and east-west. However, Braintree is now bypassed by the A120 and A131. A ring road system along Rayne Road and South Street prevents congestion within the retail centre of the Conservation Area, parts of which are pedestrianised or subject to one-way traffic restrictions. Braintree features two train stations located in the southern side of the town, both outside the Conservation Area boundary, which connect the town to Chelmsford and London Liverpool Street as part of a branch line.

The Conservation Area is architecturally varied and features many timber framed mediaeval and post- mediaeval buildings, clustered tightly together at the centre of the town. Buildings which survive from this early period provide an understanding of the layout of the medieval town, which was concentrated around the marketplace, still in use today. As Braintree expanded in later centuries it grew in all directions,

meaning the outer limits of the Conservation Area typically feature more recent buildings from the Victorian period to present day. The pinwheel appearance of the town's urban layout in eighteenth century is still legible however, with more recent additions to the town discernible as sections of infill.

A comparison between Braintree's current layout and its form on the 1777 Chapman and Andre map [Figure 6] shows that limited change to the town's road and street plan has occurred since the eighteenth century. This means that there are many good surviving examples of vernacular architecture, intermixed with successful Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings; the eclectic, varied architecture within the Conservation Area is an important reminder of the changing fortunes of the town and indicative of its long and significant history. Braintree Conservation Area is large, and its size is revealing of the varied special interest of the Town Centre. Featuring individual sections of commercial, industrial and residential architecture, the zoning of Braintree Town Centre is evidential of its phasing and evolution, emphasising its historic interest.

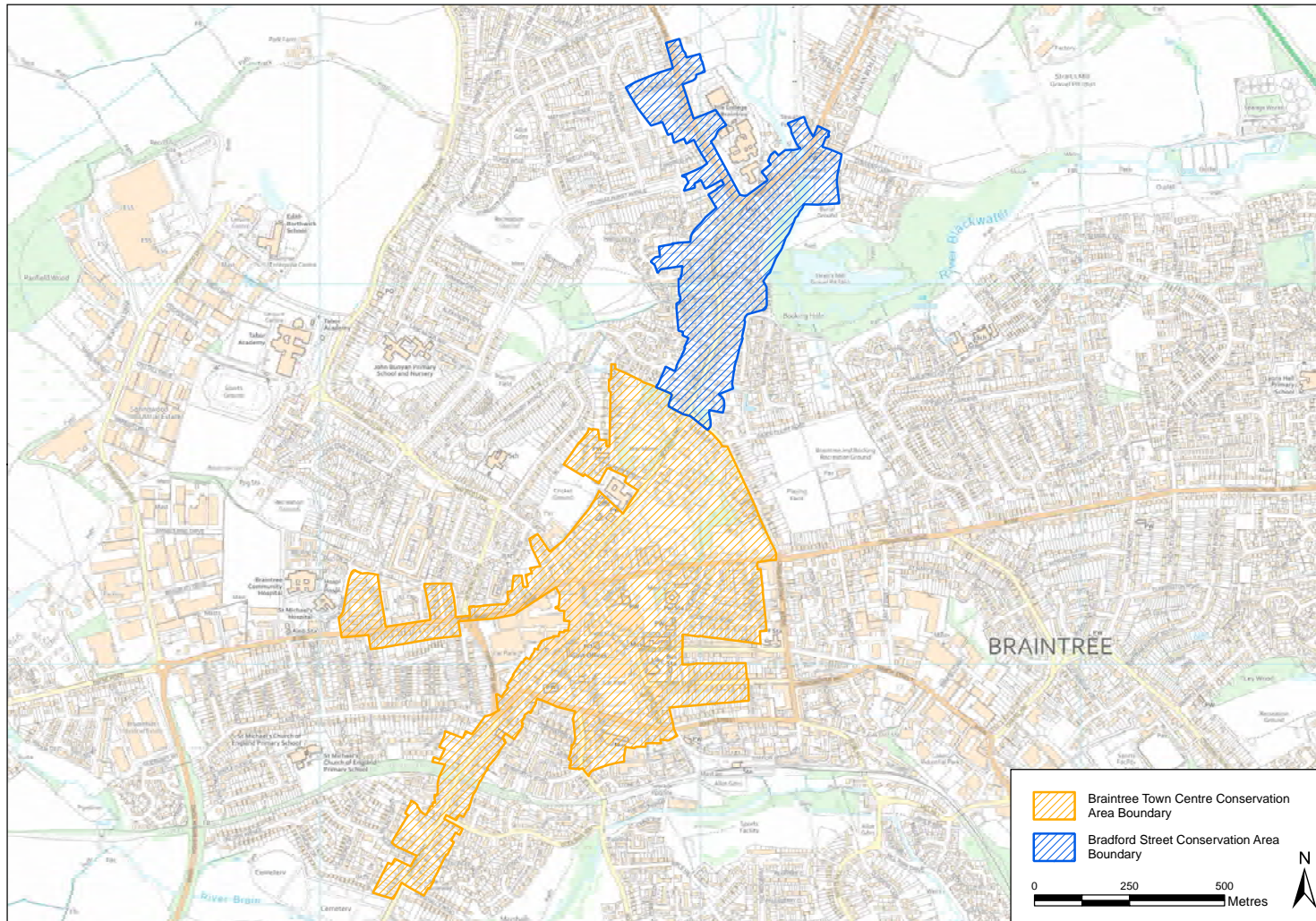


Figure 3 The Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area (orange) shown in relationship to the Bradford Street Conservation Area (blue)



2.1 Origin and Evolution

The following section provides an overview of the history of Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area and the surrounding settlement. Braintree and Bradford Street, Bocking (not to be confused with Bocking Churchstreet, to the north) grew as independent settlements, coalescing in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century as Braintree expanded. Where Braintree grew as a nucleated town, centred around a marketplace, Bocking is typical of a medieval linear settlement, focussed upon Bradford Street with a small extension north onto Broad Road and Church Lane. Although now one, the two areas have different origins, which has led to the creation of Bradford Street Conservation Area, details of which are described in section 2.3, Revisions to the Boundary.

Prehistory (-500000 BCE – 43 AD)

The history of Braintree began thousands of years ago; archaeological evidence suggests there has been some form of human activity in the area since the Mesolithic period (approximately 450,000 to 8,000 BC). A considerable amount of Bronze Age artefacts have been discovered in the locality, including Bronze Age hoard of seventeen objects uncovered in Rayne. It is thought that the Chapel Hill area, south east of the Conservation Area and close to the River Brain, was a settling place for Bronze and later Iron Age people. Known as Trinovantes, a powerful Celtic tribe, these Iron Age people were farmers, living in scattered huts along the Brain River Valley.

Roman (43 – 410 AD)

Julius Caesar led the first Roman expeditions to Britain in 55 and 54 BC. Although

Caesar did not gain control of the island at that point, a later invasion by Aulus Plautius established Roman rule in Britain in 43 AD. The Romans quickly moved across East Anglia, gaining control of Colchester and moving west, taking over Celtic towns and setting up military camps. Braintree was located on an important crossroad, where the east-west route between Colchester and St Albans met the north-south road which connected London to Long Melford.

People soon began to settle near to this cross point, developing into a small settlement south west of the crossroads, where the town centre is today, away from the Iron Age settlements. The location gave the new settlement a triangular formation. In the first century AD the Roman town was concentrated in the area around the modern day Pierrefitte Way, in the second and third centuries it expanded into what is now Rayne Road and George Yard. This important crossroads would have had a fort to protect it, however no evidence has yet been found to suggest its location.

The Roman route which connected Colchester to St Albans is part of a Roman road called Stane Street, linking Colchester and Braughing in Hertfordshire. Present day Rayne Road and Coggeshall Road roughly follow the same path.

Roman occupants of Braintree would have lived in timber framed houses, like the ones shown in the artist's interpretation in Figure 5. The drawing is based on findings from an excavation on Rayne Road, in which four individual buildings were identified, each with defined plots. Although we do not know what the buildings were covered with, we do know that they were timber framed, set upon wooden cill-beams and likely covered in thatch. A Roman Cremation vessel was found in a deep soakaway pit in the grounds of the former Kings Head Public House in Bradford Street, outside the Town Centre Conservation Area. Roman funerary traditions dictated that cemeteries were located outside of settlement boundaries; the location of the



Figure 4 An artist's interpretation of Roman building remains found on Rayne Road

uncovered cremation vessel suggests that Bradford Street and the northern section of Braintree was not occupied during the Roman period.

Early Medieval (410 – 1066 AD)

The Roman Army withdrew from Britain c.410AD, after which Braintree was vulnerable to new invaders. One of these groups was the East Saxons, who give their name to Essex. Fearing attack, the Saxons often built their settlements away from Romano-British settlements, as they did in Braintree, creating a new settlement to the east of the Roman crossroads in what is now the Chapel Hill area, east of the town centre. Although no detailed written records from the Saxon era survive, Braintree and Bocking is mentioned in a will left by Aetheric the Thane, a Saxon nobleman. After his death in 998AD, Aetheric's ownership of the area to the north of the old Stane Road was passed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the area to the south to the Bishop of London.

Medieval (1066 – 1540 AD)

By the middle of the 11th century there was a considerable community on the Bishop of London's land in Chapel Hill in the southern section of modern Braintree. A community remained in the location of the old Roman settlement, yet this was smaller in size. The larger community in Chapel Hill was referred to as Raines, thought to be derived from the Celtic name for the river Brain, or an amalgamation of two words which meant 'near the river'. Braintree appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Branchetreu and referred to the rough location of the Romano-British town, west and south west of the crossroads, not Chapel Hill. There have been many spellings of the town's name before Braintree was the accepted name. It is thought to derive from 'Branoc', a given name and 'treo', an Old English word for tree. In 1199 King John

granted Braintree a charter to hold a weekly market, which still continues today. The presence of a market shifted the focus of the area back to the crossroads and location of the Roman town, away from Raines and Chapel Hill. The first markets were held to the east of the crossroads, in the area known today as Little Square. Drury Lane, the buildings, gants and alleyways in this section of the town are thought to be a reflection of the market's layout. The routes in and out of the town established by the Romans have remained throughout the centuries, the plan of the town visible on the 1777 map of Essex [Figure 6] remains largely intact today. Soon after the market was granted, the Parish Church of St Michael's was founded and the chapel in Raines declined, falling into ruin in the nineteenth century, no trace of the chapel remains in the present day.

Well connected to Norfolk and Suffolk, Braintree flourished as a market town in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, becoming a stopping place for pilgrims on their journey from London to the shrine of Saint Edmund at Bury. Inns were built to accommodate the Pilgrims resulting in further expansion of the town. The town grew out from the marketplace, along Bank Street and then the High Street. In the early fourteenth century Braintree's cloth trade began to flourish, bringing great wealth to a number of families in the town. Many of the wealthy clothiers lived in Bocking, building great homes on Bradford Street which survive to this date.

Creating cloth was a lengthy process, beginning with a clothier who delivered raw wool to a succession of skilled workers, who worked in their own homes. Spinners mostly lived in surrounding villages, whilst the weavers lived and worked in Braintree and Bocking. The area became one of the leading manufacturing centres of wool cloth, specialising in the production of bays and says, hand woven woollen cloth; bays are lightweight whereas says are typically heavier and feature more complex twill diagonal weaves.



Figure 5 Mural from Braintree Town Hall, depicting the process of producing cloth



Figure 6 Extract from the 1777 Chapman and Andre Map of Essex

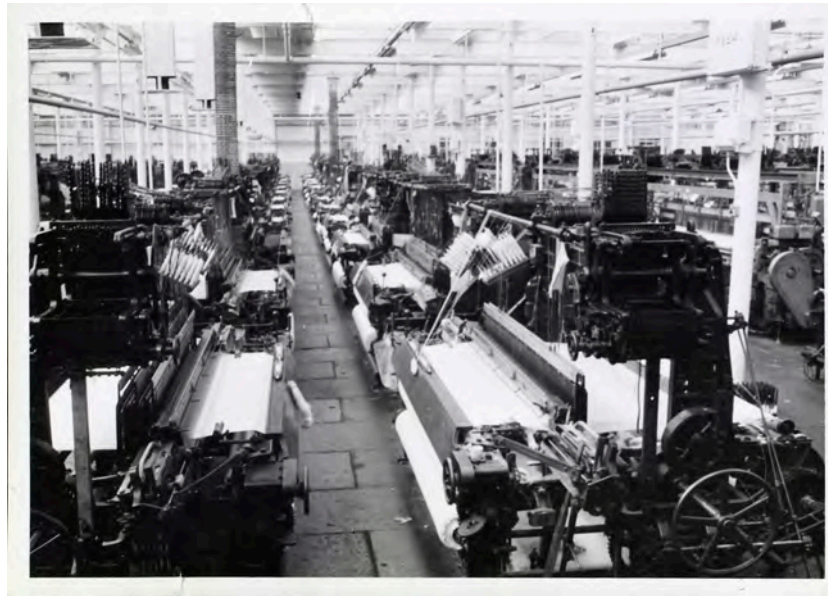


Figure 7 Looms at The Courtauld Factory ©Essex Records Office

Post-Medieval (1540 – 1901 AD)

The peak of the cloth trade was in the middle of the seventeenth century, although the trade was prone to bouts of downturn caused by breakdowns in trade between England, Spain and Portugal, who were the biggest importers of the cloth. Fortunes were fickle, as shown by the history of the Savill family who, despite having been one of many wealthy employers a century before, were left as the only wool clothiers in the Braintree and Bocking at the turn of the nineteenth century. John Savill sold the family's last cloth mill to the silk manufacturer Samuel Courtauld in 1819. From this point onwards silk became the primary textile output of the town, bringing Braintree into the industrial revolution.

Machinery and mechanised procedures allowed the silk production in the town to flourish, whilst the switch to crape, popularised by Queen Victoria as her black mourning fabric of favour, brought great fortune to the Courtauld family. Samuel Courtauld & Co, as the company became known, also pioneered the production of man-made textiles, patenting Rayon. The notoriety of Braintree also attracted Warner & Son to the town, who operated in the New Mills area for almost a century. The Warner Textile Archive is now located in the mill complex, providing public access to the extensive archive of material held by the company, including patterns and information on manufacturing techniques.

Philanthropic and well connected in north Essex, the Courtauld family were highly influential within Braintree and the wider area. Much of their legacy can be seen in the building stock and plan of the Town Centre Conservation Area; the Town Hall, Manor Street School, Bocking Memorial Gardens and St Michael's Almshouses are just a selection of the buildings commissioned by the Courtauld company for the benefit of the town.

Another important employer in the town centre was the Crittall Manufacturing Co who began in Bank Street, when Francis Crittall took over the lease of a small forge in 1849. His son, Francis Henry took control after his father's death, rapidly expanding the business into what is now the George Yard shopping area. A need for space meant the firm established a large factory in Silver End and the workers housing that followed.

The Bank Street forge remained, which, coupled with the establishment of Joseph Bradbury & Sons and Lake & Elliot Ltd engineering firms, greatly altered the appearance and focus of the town at the beginning of the twentieth century. Remnants of the town's industrial past can be seen in the New Mills complex, at the southern edge of the Conservation Area, the Victorian water towers and the rows of workers cottages on Victoria Street, Manor Street and Rayne Road.

Modern (1901 – present)

The success of the industrialisation benefitted the town at the turn of the twentieth century. In the first few decades, leisure and social facilities were created, including the Memorial Gardens which were opened in 1901. Braintree's first cinema, The Picture Palace, opened on Fairfield Road in 1912 and was replaced in the 1930s by the current building, now a pub. Another cinema operated on the High Street and was called Central Picture House; the building is now a shop.

Braintree Town Hall was opened to the public in 1928, part of a phase of building in the between war years in the town centre which also saw the expansion of Braintree's suburbs. Examples of houses built in this period are on the southern area of London Road and on St Peter's close, which were further developed as the town's population expanded. Essex was badly hit during the Blitz, with leftover bombs not dropped on



Figure 8 Workers at the Crittall factory, 1950s



Figure 9 The site of the original Crittall works, George Yard



Figure 10 Braintree Town Hall, opened in 1928



London landing on Essex towns. One of these landed in the centre of Braintree, on Bank Street. Miraculously the White Hart Hotel and Crittall factory were spared, particularly important as the Crittall factory was used for munitions during the war.

Braintree continued to expand in the latter half of the twentieth century, including the development of Pierrefitte Way, which marks the western edge of the Conservation Area. George Yard was heavily redeveloped following the closure of the Crittall site, as were the supermarket sites on South Street and Coggeshall Road. The density of buildings within the Town Centre means the changes have often been concentrated in specific areas, such as the Manor Street site which is currently under development, creating new homes, a hotel and retail space.

2.2 Revisions to the Boundary

As part of this review, the Conservation Area boundary has been revised to reflect changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Braintree's unique built environment. This review is in line with the NPPF guidance on Conservation Areas (paragraph 191).

The most significant alteration is the division of Braintree Town Centre and Bradford Street, creating two Conservation Areas. This has been considered due to the distinctions between Bradford Street and the rest of the town centre. Separating the areas allows for the special interest and alternate development history of each area to be fully realised, an appraisal document for Bradford Street has been created as part of this review of Braintree Conservation Area.

A map which marks the original and new boundary is on page 17 [Figure 14], written

descriptions and accompanying photographs are included in the following section.

Boundary Revision Area A

Bradford Street [Figure 11] has been removed from the Braintree Conservation Area, creating two designated conservation areas: Braintree Town Centre and Bradford Street. Historical maps and documentary evidence indicate that the two areas grew independently and there is a distinctly different appearance and character between the two Conservation Areas. Bradford Street is predominantly vernacular and Georgian in appearance with development concentrated along the spine of the road. Rendered, timber framed buildings dominate the streetscene, with limited use of brickwork. The land use of Bradford Street is almost exclusively residential, with almost all former commercial units converted to domestic use. In comparison, the Town Centre has a nucleated centre and features examples of industrial, retail, municipal and commercial buildings. The Town Centre is far more varied architecturally, featuring differing building styles including later nineteenth and twentieth century architecture which are almost entirely absent in Bradford Street.

Boundary Revision Area B

The boundary of the Conservation Area has been extended on Rayne Road, to include examples of mid to late nineteenth century terraced houses. These are indicative of the expansion of the town following the industrial revolution and feature attractive architectural detailing. The former workhouse site on Rayne Road, Old St Michael's Drive [Figure 18], is also included in the revised boundary. The former workhouse site was converted to residential use in the late 2000s, in a mixed development of flats and houses.

Boundary Revision Area C

George Yard [Figure 12], the modern shopping precinct at the core of the town centre, has been removed from the Conservation Area. Built in the late twentieth century, George Yard is not of historic interest and limited architectural value. Buildings within George Yard make reference to the prevailing building types in Braintree, for example featuring front facing gables however they lack the quality and sympathy in design required to merit inclusion within the Conservation Area boundary.

Developed from industrial units and formerly a back-land site, George Yard is the site of the first Crittall forge, which provides context and historical interest of national significance. These buildings feature a commemorative plaque, and external materials typical of the Conservation Area. For this reason, a small section of George Yard shopping centre has been retained within the Conservation Area, at the entrance way on Bank Street.

Boundary Revision Area D

London Road was partially included within the original boundary. The revised boundary extends the Conservation Area south, to the northern edge of Braintree Cemetery. This is to include examples of interesting mid to late nineteenth century detached and semi-detached houses, three listed buildings and good examples of early twentieth century Arts and Crafts dwellings.

Boundary Revision Area E

Notley Road is a historical route out of the town centre, meaning it features a varied collection of dwelling of various build dates. The boundary of the Conservation Area has been extended south, to include examples of older buildings which reinforce the



Figure 11 Bradford Street, which is now a separate Conservation Area



Figure 12 The modern section of George Yard, removed from the Conservation Area



Figure 13 The original Crittall works, in George Yard, remains in the Conservation Area

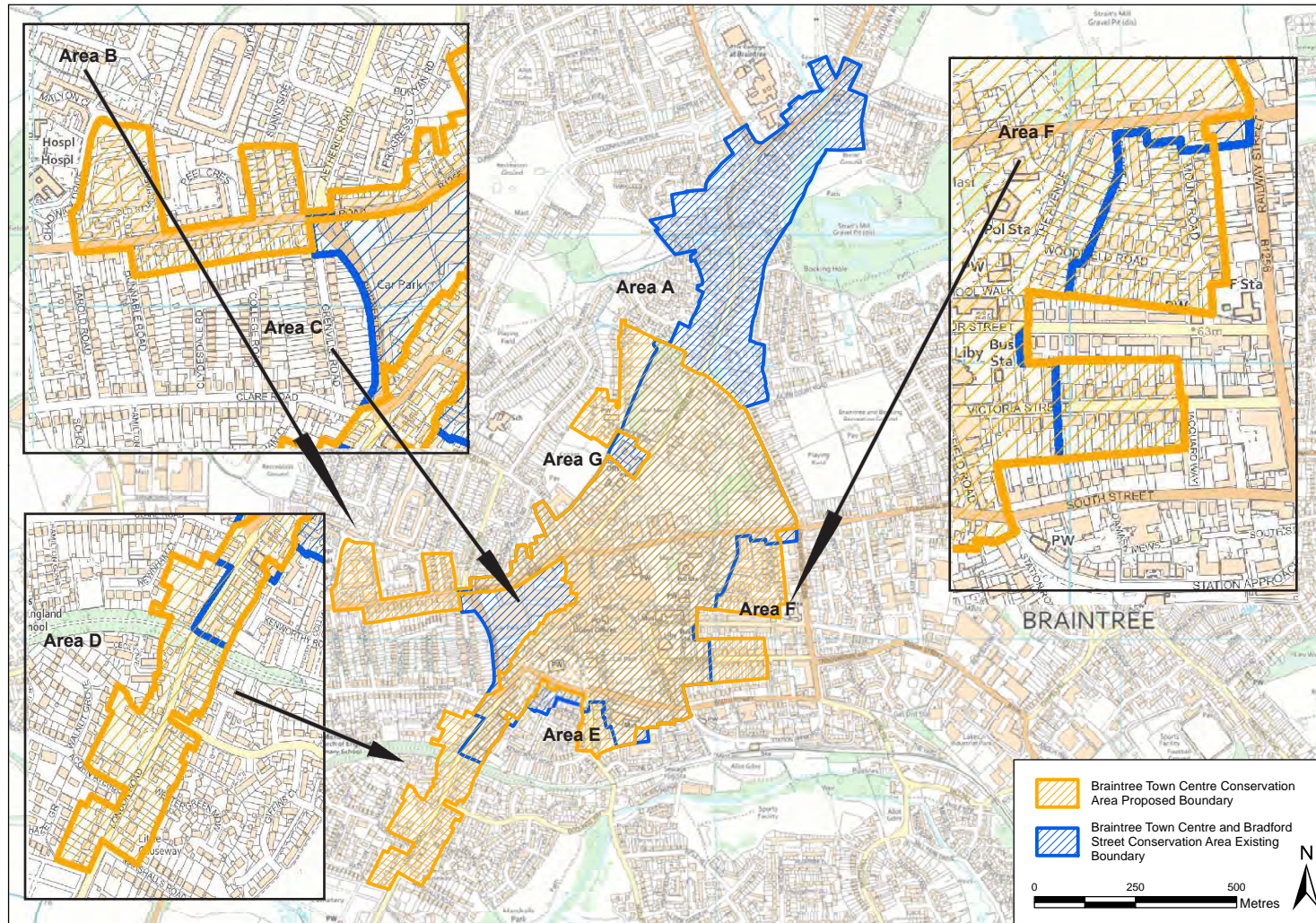




Figure 15 Terraced houses on Rayne Road, now within the Conservation Area

Figure 16 Terraced houses on Mount Road, now within the Conservation Area



Figure 17 Houses on London Road, now within the Conservation Area

special historic interest of the Conservation Area. These include the former site of The Angel public house, located on the curve of Notley Road, which now acts as the boundary marker for the Conservation Area.

Boundary Revision Area F

Sections of Woodfield Road, Victoria Street and Mount Road have been added to the Conservation Area boundary. As with the section of Rayne Road which has been added to the Conservation Area, these areas represent important Victorian and Edwardian expansion of the town, with buildings featuring a level of special interest and architectural quality worthy of preservation and conservation.

Boundary Revision Area G

The Council Offices, Causeway House, opened in 1982, has been removed from the Conservation Area. This is because the building does not reflect the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area, featuring unsympathetic external treatments and materials. Were this area to be redeveloped in a more appropriate architectural style of high quality, there may be scope for its future inclusion within the Conservation Area.

St Peters in the Fields is a Grade II listed Church, built in 1897 by JT Micklethwaite. Built in the Gothic style, its simple styling is partly due to a lack of funds, which marred its construction. The building is a good example of a late Victorian church built by a prominent architect of the period, and its inclusion within the revised Conservation Area boundary acknowledges the contribution the church makes to the area.

Surrounding dwellings to the west, south west and north east of the church have on St Peters in the Fields road also been included within the revised boundary as they too contribute positively to the local character and the setting of the Memorial Gardens, included within the previous boundary. This section of the town centre features good examples of detached houses dating from the Edwardian era and early twentieth century, in a tree lined, secluded setting.

2.3 Designated Heritage Assets

There are eighty-three designated heritage assets within the Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area boundary, including domestic and industrial buildings, a fountain and telephone kiosk. These listed buildings are shown on Figure 21, on page 21.

These buildings and structures have been listed due to their special historic and architectural interest as defined by Historic England. Further information about the listing process can be found on the Historic England website, and a link is included in section 6.3 of this document: Legislation, Policy and Guidance.

The rarer and older a building is, the more likely it is to be listed. As a general principle, all buildings that pre-date 1700 and are in a relatively intact condition will be listed, as will buildings that date between 1750 and 1850. There is a strict criterion for buildings built after 1945; buildings less than thirty years old are unlikely to be listed unless they have been deemed as exceptional examples of their type. Listed buildings are split into three grades in England. Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest and make up approximately 2.5% of all listings; Grade II* are of more than special interest; Grade II are of special interest and most common, making up 91.7% of all listings.

Listed buildings are protected by government legislation and there are policies in



Figure 18 St Micheal's Hospital, the former workhouse and now flats, is now within the Conservation Area



Figure 19 St Peters in the Fields, now within the Conservation Area



Figure 20 The Picture Palace Cinema on Fairfield Road, now a pub

place to ensure that any alterations to a listed building will not affect its special interest. It is possible to alter, extend or demolish a listed building but this requires listed building consent and sometimes planning permission. More details on applying for listed building consent can be found on Braintree's planning website: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/directory-record/6430/listed-building-consent>.

Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area contains a very high number of listed buildings which emphasises its special interest. Many building types are designated, including mill buildings, churches, constitutional clubs, historic inns, cottages and shops, providing a rich and layered representation of English architectural history. The variety is important, highlighting how the town has grown and altered over time and acknowledging the multiple phases of Braintree's development.

A full list of all the designated assets within the Conservation Area is included in Appendix 6.3. Prominent listed buildings are also highlighted in the description for each character area, as appropriate.

2.4 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

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

Heritage assets are defined in Planning Policy Legislation as 'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.'

Not all heritage assets are designated, yet although a building may not be included

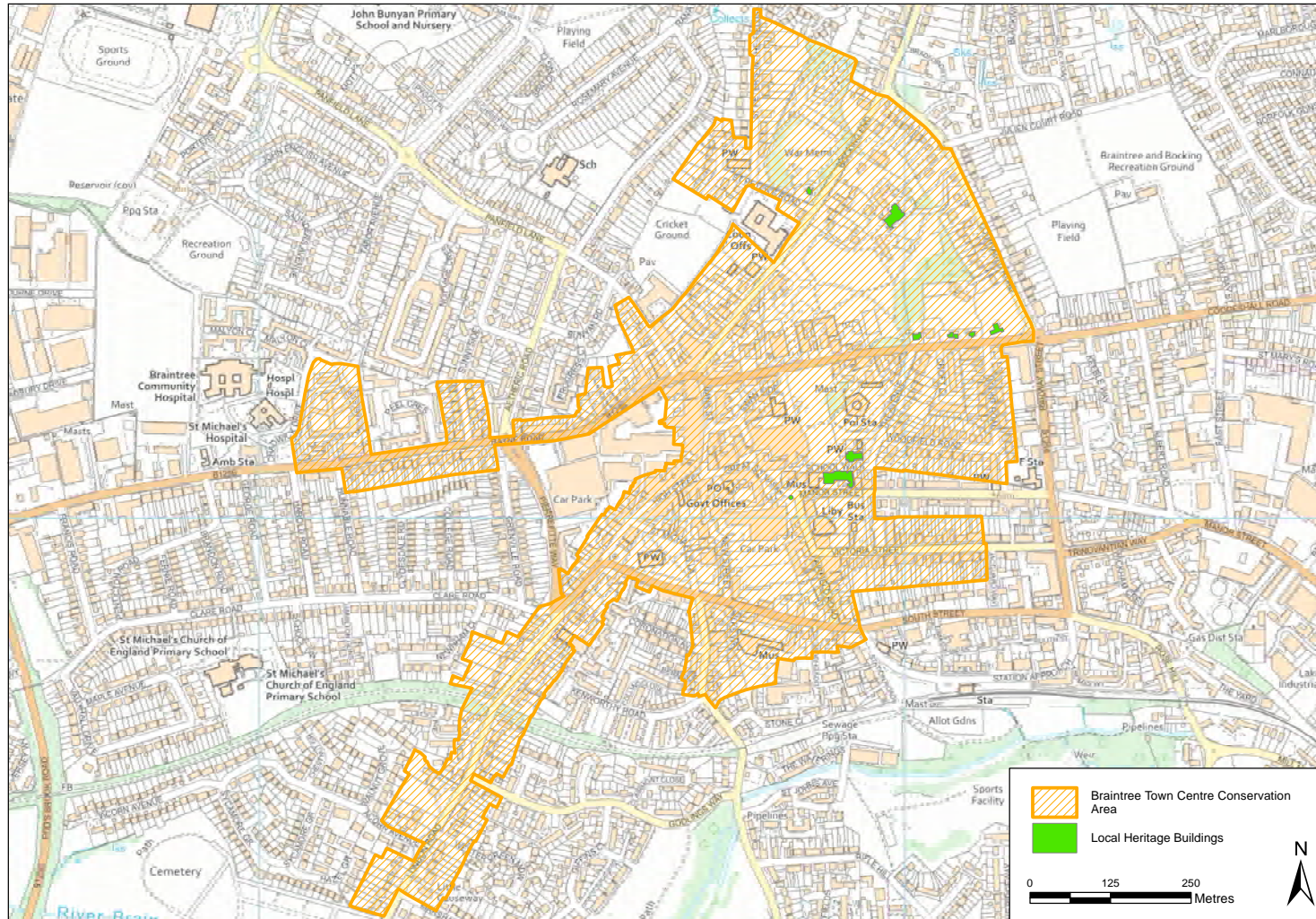


Figure 21 Map of listed buildings within the Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area



on the list, this does not mean it is of no heritage value. Buildings and other smaller features of the built environment such as fountains, railings, signs and landscaping can make a positive contribution to the appreciation of an area's historic interest and its general appearance.

Local listing is an important tool for local planning authorities to identify non-listed buildings and heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the locality. At present there is not a singular, formally approved local list for Braintree District, and this matter is discussed in the management proposals for the Conservation Area. Some buildings have, however been identified by the local authority as Local Heritage Buildings and are identified on the council's interactive mapping facility, accessed by clicking this link. Where applicable, these buildings are identified within the character area sections of this document.

As part of the appraisal of the Conservation Area, this document has identified heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and should be considered for local listing in the future. These are identified in the descriptions of each character area outlined in Section Three.

2.5 Heritage at Risk

Historic England publishes a yearly list of Heritage at Risk. To be included on the list, buildings must be Grade II* listed or above, with the exception of Grade II listed places of worship and Grade II listed buildings in London. Other designated heritage assets can also be included on Historic England's register, including Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Wreck Sites. Non-designated heritage assets are not considered by Historic England for inclusion on the Heritage at Risk Register.

There are no designated heritage assets within the Braintree Conservation Area on the At Risk Register at present. The Conservation Area itself is also not deemed to be at risk by Historic England. There are needless many areas of the Conservation Area which would highly benefit from enhancement which are identified in section 4 of this document.

2.6 Archaeological Potential

It has been demonstrated that there is a high potential for archaeological deposits from prehistory to the post-medieval period within the town centre, despite disturbance from successive phases of building and localised quarrying. Archaeological stratigraphic deposits within the urban built up areas have been recorded as up to 2.7m in places.

Due to the nature of the built-up stratigraphy within the town the potential for survival of a wide range of archaeological material is likely, coins and metal objects have been recovered as well as bone, ceramic and building material. Waterlogged deposits are known to survive in deeper features such as wells and cess-pits and have the potential to preserve paleoenvironmental evidence that provide insight into past environmental conditions and preserve a greater range of archaeological remains. Evidence of the Late Iron Age settlement has been shown to have been truncated but not destroyed by the later occupation of the town and can be expected to survive in places.

There is potential for further evidence of the Roman roads and roadside buildings along Rayne Road and within the confines of the Roman town where it is deeply buried or in less developed areas. Medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains are likely to survive relating to the growth and development of the town and its associated functions. Disturbance of below ground archaeological remains can be expected in areas of the town where cellars have been built, this has been identified

in places along Bank Street and the High Street. In places the ground has been made up through the spoil from the cellar excavations. Limited excavations beyond the town centre suggests there is good potential for the survival of archaeological features, particularly to the rear of the post-medieval settlement and in the open green spaces which lie along and between Bocking End, The Causeway and Courtauld Road.

A little bronze Roman horse and rider figurine measuring only 8cm [Figure] was found during excavations of what is now the George Yard shopping area. The rider is more Celtic in appearance than Roman and depicted as naked with the exception of a rolled belt. It is thought he would have originally held a spear in his raised right hand and either reins or a shield in his lower left hand. The figurine may have been a religious item, perhaps depicting a Celtic version of Mars, the Roman god of war.



Figure 22 Roman figurine, found within the Conservation Area

3. Assessment of Significance

3.1 Summary

The special interest of Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area is in its legibility as a mediaeval market town which has grown and developed in response to regional and national trends in industry and manufacture. Well placed geographically, the town's position allowed trade to flourish, with the town specialising in the manufacture of textiles. Weaving was incredibly important to the town's economy from the post-medieval period onwards and examples of buildings formerly associated with the textile industry remain prominent within the townscape. These include the former mill buildings and those presented to the town by its benefactors, many of whom had made their fortune in the textile trade. Changes in manufacturing techniques as part of the industrial revolution resulted in a quick expansion of the town in the late Victorian period, represented by the high number of terraces and dwellings on the edges of the Conservation Area.

At the centre, the vernacular and medieval appearance of the town is still visible, evidenced by the dense, low rise streetscape and narrow, winding road pattern. Many of the buildings in the Conservation Area are traditional in construction, with timber being a dominant building material. Gentrification and rationalisation of the façade of some buildings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries disguises the build date of many properties, however service areas, rear elevations and roof forms remain indicative of the Conservation Area's historical nature.

Areas of parkland and open space provide sections of reprieve and seclusion which contribute positively to the character of the Conservation Area. Topographical high points within the Conservation Area boundary are limited, however the position of St Michael's Church and its surrounding churchyard brings a focus and sense of space to the centre of the town, allowing for views across the Conservation Area, toward the

basin of the River Brain.

Land use is zoned, with sections of the Conservation Area fulfilling specific functions, such as commercial, recreational, or residential uses. This has provided the basis of the character areas outlined in the following sections and provides an understanding of how the town centre developed.



Figure 23 View of the Conservation Area from Notley Road



3.2 Character Areas

The Conservation Area is divided into six Character Areas:

1. London Road
2. Commercial Core
3. The Mills
4. Victoria Street, Mount Road and Woodfield Road
5. Rayne Road
6. The Parks

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

A map of the character areas is on the following page [Figure 24].

Prevailing architectural styles, building materials, spatial planning, landscaping and boundary materials are detailed in the description of each Character Area to highlight the special architectural and historic value of the six zones. Photographs are included to aid the descriptions, providing examples where appropriate to inform the understanding of this document. Each character area features designated heritage assets, a full list of the designations within the Conservation Area are included as appendix 6.3 to this document.

Designated buildings or structures which make a notable contribution to each character area are described in the following sections, however the omission of any buildings from the description does not mean they make no contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. An assessment of the significance of each listed building and the contribution it makes to the special interest of the Conservation Area should be made when development or alterations are proposed.

Non-designated buildings or features deemed to reflect and enhance the special interest of the Conservation Area are also identified in the descriptions of each character area. These may be suitable for local listing; information regarding the definition of a non-designated heritage asset can be found in section 2.5 of this document. As with the listed structures, not all buildings that contribute to, or reinforce the character of the Conservation Area have been identified within this appraisal of the Conservation Area. Other buildings which feature architectural detailing typical of the Conservation Area, for example, would also be considered to contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area. Future development must be assessed on an individual basis, remaining considerate of Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area's special interest, with the aim to enhance or preserve those aspects which contribute to its significance.

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

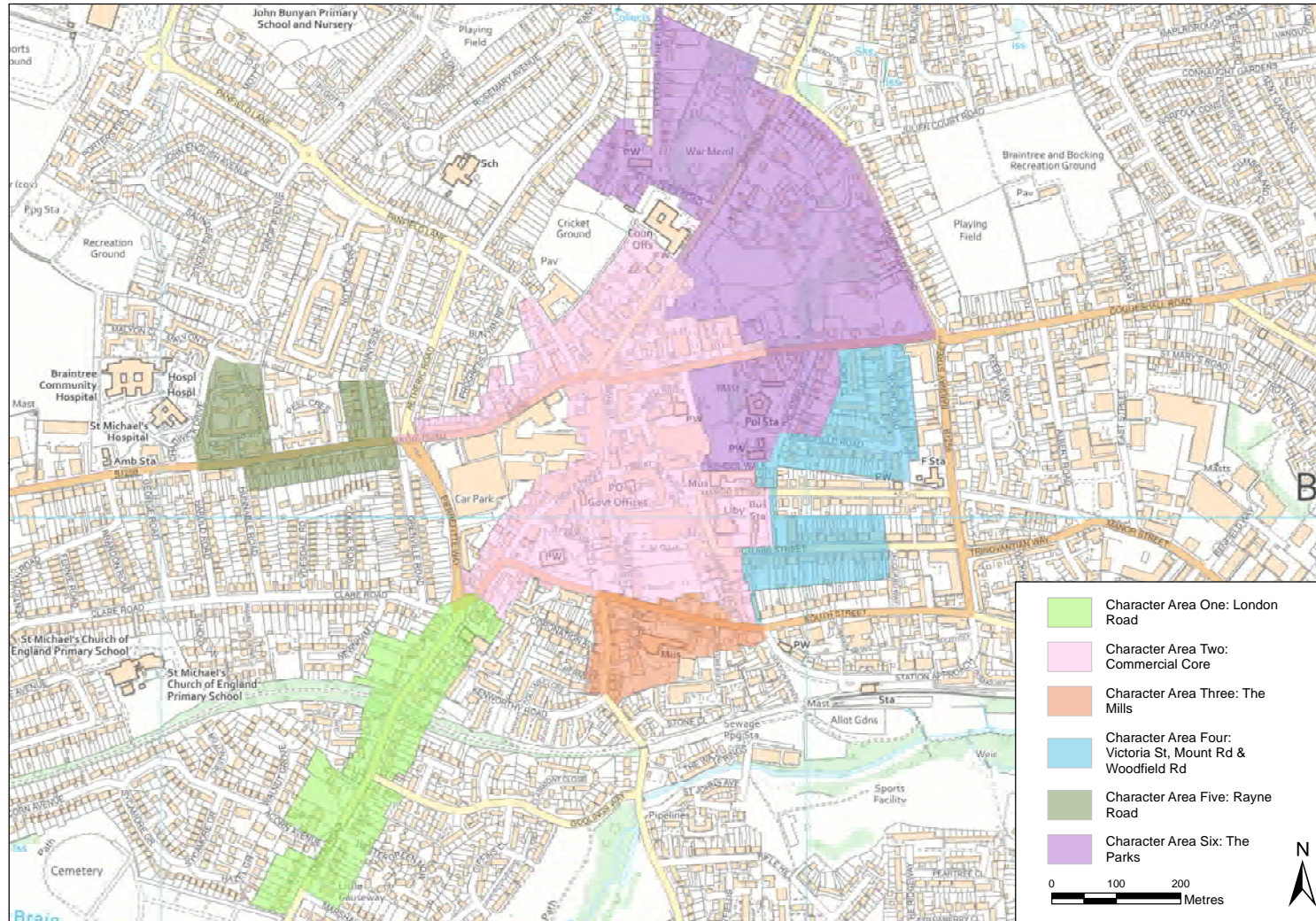


Figure 24 Map showing the Character Areas within Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area

3.2.1. London Road

Description

At the south western edge of the Conservation Area, London Road is one of the principal routes into the centre of Braintree and primarily residential. The northern section of the road rises in land level to adjoin the High Street, which is visible from the road junction. Buildings on London Road range in date from the late seventeenth to twenty-first century, representing multiple phases of Braintree's history. The first edition OS map shows that the road layout and pattern of development on the eastern side of the road was established by the late nineteenth century; the prevailing character is of late Victorian and Edwardian detached and semidetached houses within large grounds.

Development of London Road was spurred on in the nineteenth century by the creation of the Fitch Way, a now dismantled railway which ran underneath the road, between Numbers 45 and 47. The railway connected Braintree to Bishops Stortford and closed to passengers in 1952. For the next twenty years it was used by freight trains, finally closing in 1972. The train line is now a maintained park. Dwellings are typically set back from the road behind gardens, giving the road a green appearance and sense of space, emphasised by the gaps in built form. Compared to the High Street it adjoins, the London Road Character Area is quiet and expansive, featuring a footpath on each side. The change in land levels emphasises the turns of the road, allowing for a varied kinetic experience when travelling through the Character Area which emphasises the variety of building types present, preventing a sense of enclosure or homogeneity.

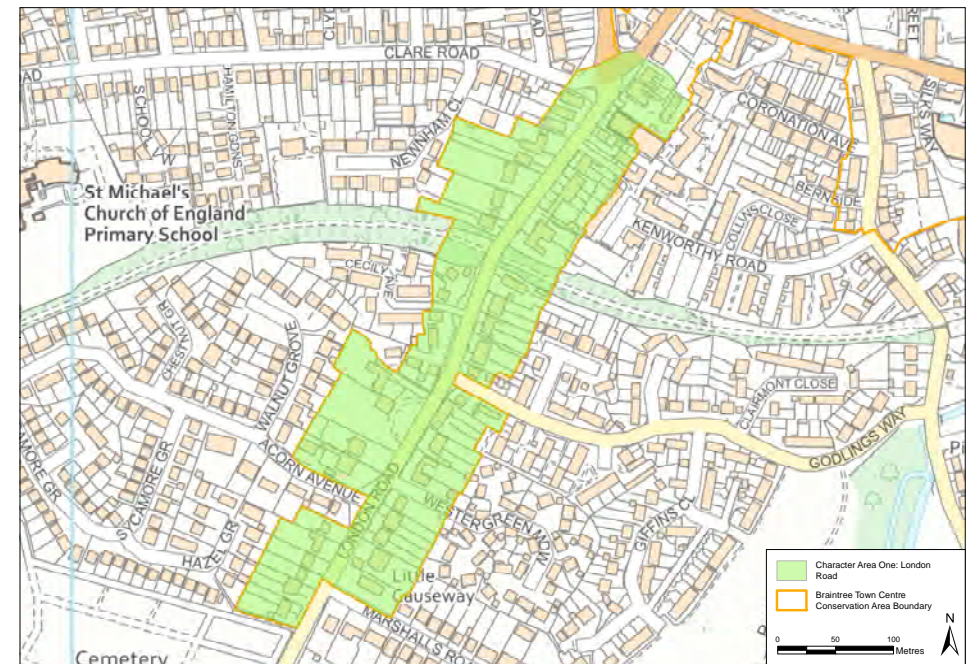


Figure 25 Map of Character Area One, London Road, shown in green



Figure 26 The Flitch Way



Figure 27 View looking north up London Road, from taken from the bridge over the Flitch Way

Where present, twentieth and twenty first century development has been sympathetic to the character of the area, maintaining a regular grain of development which diminishes toward the southern section of the road and Braintree Cemetery. As part of this appraisal the Conservation Area boundary has been extended along London Road to encompass dwellings represent the development of Braintree in the early twentieth century. These buildings are good examples of their type and represent an important recent phase of the town's history.

Layout and Land Usage

London Road is a predominantly straight road, running northsouthwest from the junction between the High Street and Pierrefitte Way in the centre of town, towards Great Notley. The road kinks slightly in the centre of the Character Area as it passes over the Flitch Way. Buildings are almost exclusively residential, with the exception of Christ Church, a late nineteenth century classically designed Chapel, at the northern end of the Character Area. The building grain is tighter in the northern section of the London Road, featuring examples of smaller terraced houses and reflecting the density of the town centre. To the south, away from Braintree's centre, the houses are more generously proportioned and spaced with a more suburban character.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

The Flitch Way runs beneath London Road, which bridges the disused railway. Now a maintained park used recreationally by walkers and cyclists, the Flitch Way is largely unseen from street level. Trees and a boundary wall indicate the bridge's presence; a small footpath leads from the north western side of the bridge to the Flitch Way below. The Flitch Way provides a green break in built form, with its tree cover and the narrowing of the road acting as a transitional element on the journey out of the Conservation Area. This sense of transition is emphasised by the development on

Cecily Avenue, formerly the site of the William Julien Courtauld hospital.

Landscaping in the Character Area is minimal. Nonetheless, the positioning of properties, set back from the pavement behind front gardens and generously spaced at the southern edge of the Character Area, means London Road has a green, open character and appearance.

Key Buildings

Designated

There are six designations within the London Road Character Area. All are Grade II, and details of the designated buildings can be found in Appendix 6.3.

Four of the six designations are clustered together at the centre of the character area and represent two phases of development. Numbers 23-33 (odd) are an eighteenth century terrace, indicative of vernacular, timber framed houses of the period [Figure 28]. In contrast, number 19 and 21, and 35 and 37 are more formal in appearance, semi-detached pairs from the nineteenth century. Number 41, a detached house, features architectural detailing similar to that of the semidetached listed buildings and dates from the same period, giving these dwellings a group value. All feature hipped roofs and ornamentation around the windows and doors, in a classical styling with emphasis on proportion and form.

Non-designated

Christ Church, 12 London Road is a nineteenth century chapel and typical of the period [Figure 29]. Featuring an imposing gabled main façade, the building is classical in appearance featuring pedimented windows and stone cross at the apex of the gable. Built in gault brick, it is located at the road junction and a prominent part of the



Figure 28 23-33 London Road (left hand side) and 35 and 37 London Road, all Grade II listed



Figure 29 Christ Church



Figure 30 Nineteenth century houses, 47 - 57 London Road



Figure 31 91 London Road



Figure 32 36 London Road

streetscape.

10-20 London Road, three pairs of red brick semidetached houses which retain some original windows and doors are set back from the road, in an elevated position.

36 London Road [Figure 32], a large, detached Arts and Crafts house with Neo-Tudor mock beams, decorative chimneys and sash windows.

47-53 London Road, a collection of late nineteenth century semidetached pairs.

52 and 54 London Road, a large three storey townhouse, now flats. Buff brick, set back from the road and largely concealed by hedgerow.

56 London Road, a large two storey gault brick house, now two dwellings. The property features decorative tiles to front gable and parapet to ground floor bay window.

64 London Road, an early twentieth century detached house with original windows.

91 London Road [Figure 31], an early twentieth century Neo-Georgian house in buff brick with original timber windows across the front elevation, including two bow bay windows at ground floor level and sliding sashes on the first floor. Semi-circular door canopy and original Edwardian door featuring decorative glass.

103 London Road, an early twentieth century rendered house in a vernacular style, featuring a cat slide roof and unusual turquoise coloured roof tiles.

Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

The variety of building ages within London Road influences the building materials used. Older properties are located closer to the town centre and area timber framed with a rendered exterior; later buildings are typically brick. Despite the variety in building ages, traditional materials dominate the Character Area.

Roofs

Roofs are often an indicator of a building's age: older properties on London Road are covered in plain tiles whilst most nineteenth century homes use natural slate, concrete tiles feature on twentieth century dwellings.

Decorative tiles are found throughout the character area and add interest to the roofscape. These include scalloped tiles, creating a fish scale pattern, and turquoise enamel tiles. Finials and intricate ridge tiles are also features of the roofline on London Road.

Roof pitch varies according to building style; catslide, hipped and gabled roofs all feature throughout London Road, giving the Character Area an eclectic appearance. Where present, gables are typically perpendicular to the street, small gables facing the street are normally an architectural decoration or feature, above bay windows. Dormer windows and rooflights are not dominant features in the street scene and should not be introduced.

Chimneys are a prominent feature of the roofscape and reflect the age of the building's on London Road. Older buildings often feature extremely large chimneys, visible from some distance. Buildings are typically two storeys in height, rising to



Figure 33 Photograph of the roofscape on London Road

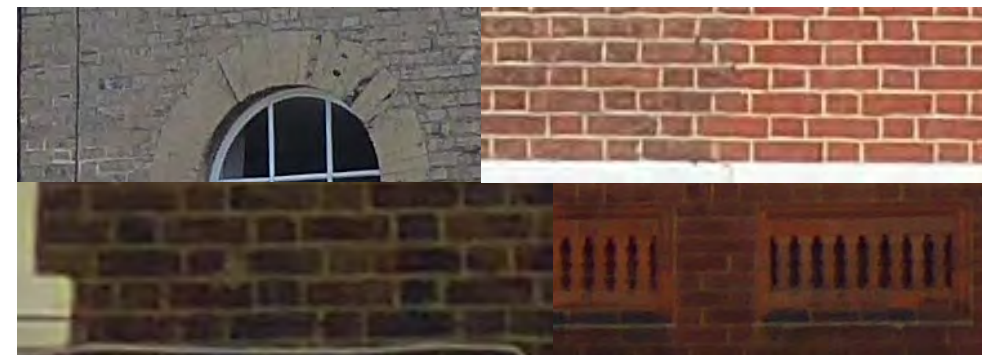


Figure 34 Examples of brickwork in the Character Area



Figure 35 Example of Render, London Road



Figure 36 Pebbledash, 23-33 London Road

three storeys in the central section of the Character Area, near the Flich Way.

Walls

Brick dominates the London Road Character Area. Red brick is the most prominent but buff (a light-yellow colour) and stock brick (a darker, mid tone) also feature. Brickwork is employed decoratively and sometimes varies between principle and side elevations – deeper coloured bricks are found on principle elevations. Flemish bond is most common, and many houses feature string courses and/or banding between each floor. Some brickwork is painted; painting any brickwork which is currently exposed will cause harm to the structure and should not occur.

Render is most common on the older properties in the Character Area, some twentieth century buildings feature rendered panels as part of their Arts and Crafts or Neo-Tudor design. Where present, render is painted in neutral tones: creams, soft greys and yellows.

Pebbledash, where present, adds texture and variation in tone to the street scene. 23-33 London Road are good examples of how pebbledash can be visually interesting and are an example of an early use of the material as a substitute for traditional lime render.

Timber cladding is not a feature of this section of the Conservation Area. If present, it is on outbuildings or garages, not principle dwellings.

Windows and Doors

Many of the buildings retain their original timber windows and doors. Stone surrounds are common for windows, as are arched brick lintels. Sash windows are most

common, although some older houses do feature casement windows.

Mid to late twentieth century properties towards the southern section of the Character area have nearly all lost their original windows, replaced by uPVC. Many of these houses would have featured metal framed windows, the reinstatement of which would be beneficial to the appearance of the houses and Conservation Area.

Fanlights, sidelights and coloured glass are attractive features of some retained original doors and add visual interest. Unsympathetic modern uPVC doors are present on some properties, and the infilling of storm porches has removed period features such as tiled doorways and lanterns from the streetscape.

Extended porches are not a typical feature of the Character Area. Where present, porches are recessed, storm porches, and feature decorative brick or stone detailing as part of the door surround. The infilling of some storm porches detracts from the design and symmetry of houses on London Road.

Gabled or flat canopies feature on some properties but are not a dominant feature and should not be introduced.

Boundary Treatments

Most properties are set back from the road behind gardens, although many of these have recently been converted to driveways and off-road parking. Hedgerow and low-lying brick walls add to the increasingly suburban appearance of London Road towards the southern edge of the Character Area and are an important characteristic.

Hedges, railings and low-level walls add to a sense of openness and should be retained. Where present, close boarded fencing is incongruous. Painting (in a dark



Figure 37 Examples of timber sash windows, brick, slate and painted render on London Road



Figure 38 Examples of doors within the Character Area

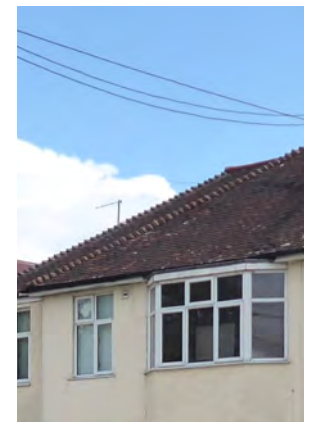


Figure 39 Example of uPVC windows



brown or green) or replacing sections of fencing with hedgerow would improve the appearance of the area.

Public Realm

Public Realm within the Character Area is limited to areas of pavement, the road and few small sections of grass at road junctions. The Flitch Way [Figure 26], although present, does not make an active contribution to the appearance of the character area as it is largely hidden from view. The bridge and trees around the Flitch Way add an important green element to the streetscape, however the lack of interpretation, signage, or visibility from London Road onto the disused railway below, mean the Flitch Way is not easily discernible from street level.

The set back of properties, behind front gardens, mean that the Character Area appears spacious despite the lack of public space. Pavements are wide, on either side of the road, giving good pedestrian access. There are limited pedestrian crossings; the only light controlled crossing is at the northern edge of the Character Area, at the junction with the High Street.

Where modern (late twentieth century – present) housing has been developed east or west of London Road, these are accessed via road junctions, there are few alleys or footpaths within the Character Area. At these junctions, open sections of grass or gardens create a wide road opening, furthering emphasising the suburban appearance of London Road. At the entrance to Acorn Avenue, for example, there are two sections of grass which provide an important break in built form, opening up the western side of the road. A post box on the northern side indicates this land is public amenity space, albeit underutilised.

Wide pavements allow for decoration and enhancements to the visual interest of the public realm, such as the planters on the section of pavement between Godlings Way and Marshalls Road. Telegraph poles in this section of the road, the set back of numbers 83 to 89 and prominent hedges of 48 London Road, on the west side, as well as the properties on Cecily Avenue, make this section of the Character Area visually interesting and complex, highlighting the multiple phases of development which have occurred.

Signage and traffic management within London Road is minimal, marking speed limits and junctions. Bus stops, where present, do not benefit from shelters or designated stopping bays. Streetlights along London Road feature concrete bases and utilitarian lamps, adding no heritage interest to the public realm.

Views

Key views within the character area are identified on the following page in Figure 40.

London Road is principally straight, meaning views up and down the road are important, particularly looking south, where the grain of development loosens. Views along the road highlight how Braintree has expanded and grown over time. The cluster of listed buildings at the centre of London Road and Victorian villas around the Flitch Way are indicative of the importance of the railway to the town's development, whilst the presence of the Flitch Way adds a green backdrop to the centre of the character area.

Looking out from the southern section of the character area and the edge of the Conservation Area, the cemetery and Marshalls Park reinforce the earlier, rural, edges of the settlement, now removed by the presence of the A120 and expansion

of Notley Green.

Views north, towards the High Street, highlight the London Road Character Area's differing density of built form, comparative to the tightly packed streets of Character Area Two, the Commercial Core. Looking toward Pierrefiette Way, from the corner of London Road and Clare Road, is a detracting viewpoint, which could be improved by lessening the traffic or more visually appealing footpaths and traffic barriers.

Throughout the Character Area, the presence of hedgerow, trees, good boundary walls and railings, create a suburban appearance to London Road. This is enhanced by long views up and down the road, emphasised by the wide street and set back of properties from the pavement.

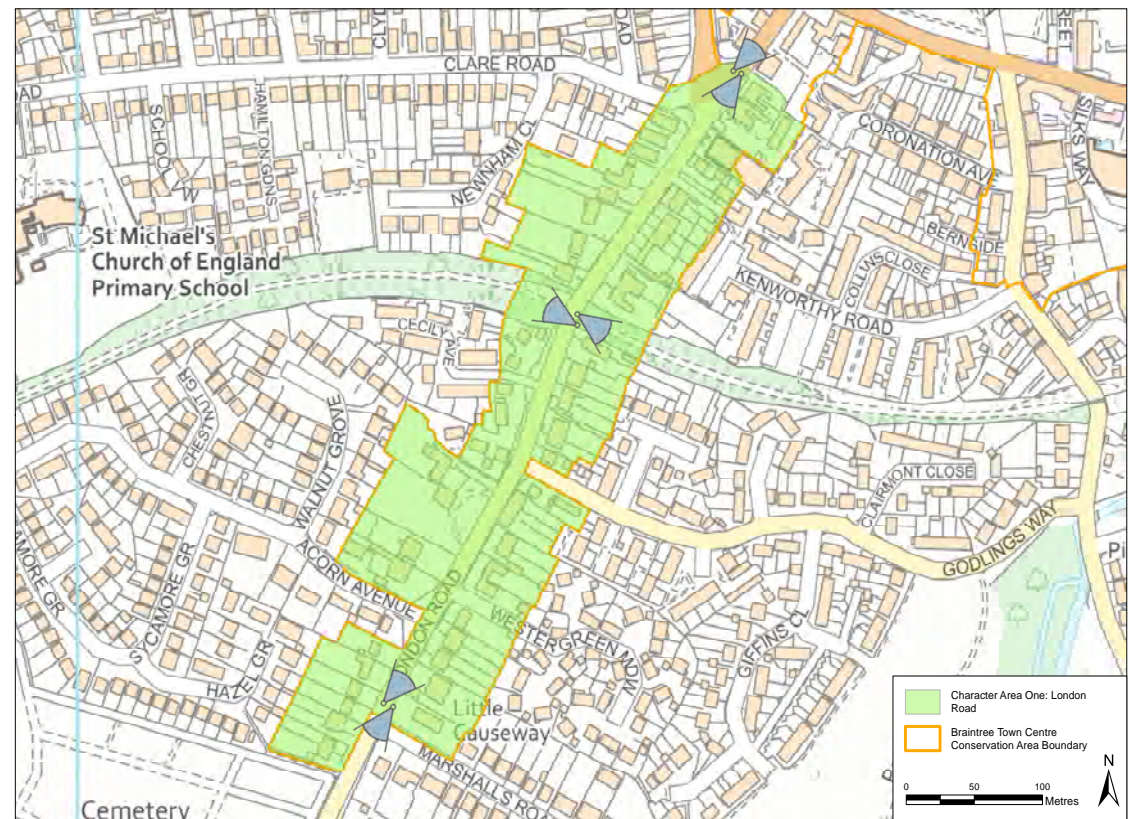


Figure 40 Map showing notable viewpoints within the Character Area

3.2.2. Commercial Core

Description

The Commercial Core Character Area includes the High Street, St Michael's Lane, New Street, Great Square, Bank Street, Swan Side, Market Place, Fairfield Road, Bocking End and sections of Rayne Road, Panfield Lane, Manor Street and Coggeshall Road.

Revisions to the boundary exclude George Yard shopping area and Pierrefitte Way from the Conservation Area, details of which are in section 2.3 of this document.

This Character Area contains some of the oldest buildings in the town centre, including St Michael's Church, at the southern side of the Character Area. The surviving block plan follows the medieval plan of the town, radiating around the original marketplace, which was located immediately south of The Swan public house between Drury Lane and Bank Street. As the town grew and industries changed, the marketplace was infilled and moved to its present location, south east of its original site. Buildings still present in the location of the original market, such as The Old Manor House and Swan Public House, suggest the formalisation of stalls and infilling of the market had begun by the sixteenth century.

Surviving 'gants' (alleyways) between buildings on Swan Side and Great Square also suggest the layout of original stalls and highlight the influence of Flemish weavers on the town, with the term gant originating from the Flemish word 'gang', meaning corridor.

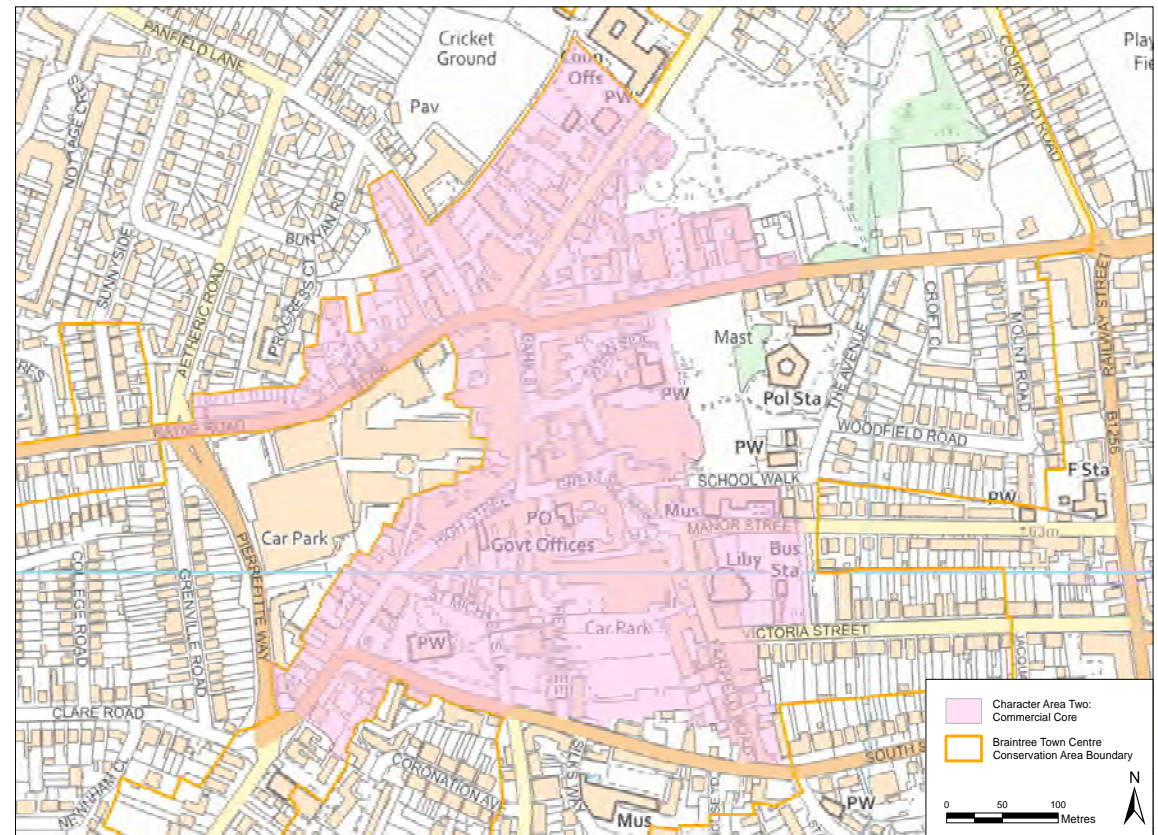


Figure 41 Map of Character Area Two, shown in pink



Figure 42 The junction of the High Street and South Street, by St Michael's Church



Figure 43 Braintree Town Hall



Figure 44 Braintree Museum

Braintree flourished in the medieval period due to the cloth trade, which continued to be a focus for the town's economy until the twentieth century. Changes in technology and production, including the advent of the railway and establishment of engineering firms in the twentieth century have meant the centre of the town has continually evolved, resulting in a rich and varied building stock in this Character Area. Vernacular, mediaeval buildings are often hidden behind Georgian facades, nestled between early twentieth century infill buildings. Some Victorian shop fronts survive, as do early windows, typically on higher floors.

As indicated by its name, this Character Area is focussed on the retail centre of the town and the heart of the Conservation Area. Shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes are the dominant building use, with some residential areas and uses on upper floors, in converted units and in periphery streets. Industry and trade extended the town centre outwards from the medieval marketplace, with workshops, yards and warehouses historically located to the rear of the principle buildings of the town centre. Many of these areas have been redeveloped within recent years, providing large supermarket units and blocks of residential flats to the rear of the principal streets.

Municipal buildings are also important to the character area and include Braintree Town Hall, library and museum, located on Manor Street and Fairfield Road. Together these three buildings provide an important public service which is emphasised by their positioning next to each other at an entry point to the town centre.

Buildings within the character area have a strict hierarchy of floors, which diminish in size on higher storeys; many buildings feature attic accommodation. Average building height is three storeys, reflecting the age of the structures. Currently underway, the new Manor Street development, to the rear of the Town Hall, will bring greater focus to the Market Square and Braintree's retail core.

Layout and Land Usage

Braintree town centre developed around the junction of modern day Coggeshall Road and Bank Street and the central, medieval marketplace, which was located between Drury Lane, Great Square and Swan Side.

The Commercial Core Character Area's layout remains indicative of this early block plan, with outer streets away from the marketplace featuring architectural details and styles which highlight their later construction dates, comparative to the market place and Bank Street. Houses on Manor Street, for example, are built in brick which was a prevailing building material in the Victorian and Edwardian periods (the street was constructed in the middle of the nineteenth century). Properties on New Street, built in the eighteenth century are instead typically timber framed and rendered, perhaps featuring a formal brick frontage to suggest status and wealth.

Some of the oldest buildings in the Conservation Area are clustered around the medieval market square, which are thought to have derived from temporary market stalls, formalised into permanent buildings. A clear example of this is the southern elevation of The Swan Public House [Figure 45], which is a relatively complete frontage of sixteenth century buildings that likely would have included small shops and workshops at ground floor level.

The present-day Market Place, south east of the original location, remains a focal point of the town centre. The Town Hall [Figure 43], on Fairfield Road, demarks the south eastern corner of the current market 'square', which is now an elongated rectangle of open space within the town centre. The town hall, library and museum are all located on the present day marketplace, giving a municipal and public amenity focus to the centre of the Character Area.



Figure 45 The Swan Public House



Figure 46 A small area of space on Bank Street remains in the location of the original marketplace and remains in use today



Figure 47 The foreground shows tightly packed buildings on Bank Street, with the High Street behind



Figure 48 St Micheal's Church and churchyard

Buildings in the older sections of the Character Area are densely packed, with few spaces between. The High Street has a continuous frontage, with building sizes relating to the burgage plots set out in the medieval period. Small gants between properties in the Character Area allow for pedestrian cut throughs, creating intimate and kinetic views which allow for an appreciation of the character area's history. The High Street leads south away from the Market Place to St Michael's Church and London Road. Built in the twelfth century, St Michael's is the oldest building in the town and marks a break in built form. Streets surrounding the church reflect the ecclesiastical focus of this section of the town, such as The Vestry, whilst the lower building heights of properties at the southern edge of the High Street afford greater prominence to the church.

New Street was developed in the early seventeenth century as a new market street, perpendicular to the High Street, following the infilling of the original marketplace. The development of the Tesco site has altered the ability to read New Street as it once was, yet surviving buildings and features of the street are indicative of the street's past functions. One example of this is the small and brick structure with a lean-to roof to the north of The Chophouse. This small building built in 1840 was formerly the town lockup, ceasing to be used as a jail cell around 1875. The main routes in the Commercial Core Character Area run north, east, south and west, away from the centre and out into the more residential areas of the Conservation Area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

Buildings are tightly packed throughout the Character Area, which makes the few areas of open space, on Bank Street [Figure 46], the Market Square and by St Michael's church [Figure 48] important breaks in the density of development, allowing for publicly accessible areas for seclusion and recreation. St Michaels Church yard contributes to the significance of the listed building by offering a sense of removal

and separation from the density and volume of built form surrounding the church.

As a contributor to the significance of the Conservation Area, the church yard allows the form of the church to be appreciated whilst also offering an area of seclusion and tranquillity within the otherwise dense town centre. At the church's north west entrance, separated by railings and heavily landscaped, the Grade II listed fountain is a focal point of this section of the character area, at the junction between St Michael's Road and the High Street. Donated by the Coutauld family in 1938, the fountain is Grade II listed. The design features late art nouveau themes of naturalism, featuring curving lines and a sense of playfulness. Four seals are seated at the fountain's edge, with a central sculpture of a boy holding a fish in each hand, atop a large swirling shell.

The fountain was designed by John Hodge and cast in bronze at the Burton foundry in Thames Ditton, greater London. Together, the church, fountain and almshouses to the south are an important group, with the openness and set back of buildings emphasising the rise in land levels and offering long views to the south.

The Market Square, sections of wide pavement on Bank Street and Great Square offer areas of space and respite, featuring benches and other items of street furniture. On market days stalls are present in these areas, and there is scope for better public engagement with these sections of the town, which are described within the management proposal section of this document. There are two large car parks within the Character Area, serving the two supermarkets in the town centre. The appearance of these is utilitarian, detracting from the character of the Conservation Area. Areas of planting at the edges of the car parks add an element of greenery, yet these are areas which offer no engagement or visual interest.



Figure 49 St Michael's Church and Fountain



Figure 50 77 High Street, Grade II listed



Figure 51 Former Essex County Library, Coggeshall Road, Grade II listed



Figure 52 Bradbury House, New Street, Grade II listed

Key Buildings

Designated

There are sixty-one designations within the Commercial Core Character Area, details of which are included in list format in Appendix 6.3 and demarked on Figure 21. This high number emphasises the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area, with many of the properties listed due to their age and construction. Five of the designations are listed Grade II*, with remainder listed as Grade II. There are no Grade I designations.

Grade II* buildings within the Commercial Core Character Area are the Town Hall, Constitutional Club, The Old Manor House (Bank Street), The Swan Public House and St Michael's Church.

St Michael's Church is the oldest building in the town, dating from the twelfth to thirteenth century, enlarged in the fifteenth to sixteenth century and restored in the Victorian period. Much of the exterior is evidential of the Victorian renovations, with almost all the windows nineteenth century, in a free Geometric style, featuring trefoils, circles and crosses. It has a tall, shingled broach spire and much medieval fabric remains in the interior.

Braintree Town Hall, built between 1926-8, was designed by Vincent Harris, and is built in a neo-Georgian style. It has been described by architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner as 'Just the right size for a small but prosperous town'.

Large sections of the High Street and Bank Street include listed buildings, many of which are designated due to their age. Of these, there a handful of listed coaching

inns, including The Boar's Head Hotel, The Swan, The White Hart, The Bull and The Horn Hotel, now split into different commercial and residential units. These highlight how Braintree operated as an important market town, with merchants and prospective customers travelling from further afield to purchase and sell goods in the town. All are timber framed and typically occupy more than one postal address, with the inns having expanded over time.

Shops are also incredibly important to the Character Area, and many of the retail units are listed despite having been altered at ground floor, shop level. The higher storeys of buildings often provide an indication of the building's past use, perhaps as a dwelling, or offices. 106 High Street [Figure 54] features a double jetty, and is one of a few relatively unaltered buildings on the street which provide a visible insight into how the high street would have looked in the medieval period. The building dates from the fifteenth century, with a later sixteenth century range and eighteenth century alterations, which include the existing first floor windows.

Number 77 High Street is a good example of a building that has been heavily adapted and altered over time. At its core, the building is a fifteenth century timber framed structure, yet it was restored and adapted in the eighteenth century to feature Italianate windows. Its side passageway way was retained, and the cornices suggest the building featured jettied upper floors.

Barclays Bank on Bank Street [Figure 56] is one of few examples of a building constructed in buff coloured brick within the Character Area. Built on the corner of the street, it is double fronted, also featuring an entrance on Rayne Road.

37 and 39 Bank Street [Figure 55] serves as the primary entrance to George Yard and features an impressive, decorative brick frontage with columns and shop fronts at ground floor level. Behind the brick front is a timber framed building thought to date



Figure 53 The Bull, one of the town centre's many pubs



Figure 54 106 High Street



Figure 55 37-39 Bank Street, doubling as an entrance to George Yard



Figure 56 Barclays Bank



Figure 57 Example of one of the town centre's many gants



Figure 58 Braintree's two water towers, both now in residential use



from the fifteenth century; the building was entirely refronted in 1758.

Non-designated

There is no published, formal Local List in Braintree District, yet some buildings have been acknowledged by the local authority and Local Heritage Buildings, two of which are within the Commercial Core Character Area. These are Braintree Museum and The Water Fountain on Market Place.

Braintree Museum [Figure 44] was first built as Manor Street School following a donation of £2,000 from George Courtauld II in 1862, for the non-sectarian education of lower class children of both sexes.

The original building partly included the site of a 1820 British School has been extended over time, with the original block now at the centre of the museum site. Built in red brick with a slate roof and gothic stone windows, the museum building's featuring strong gables which give the single storey buildings a strong presence within the street scene, despite their low height. The use of slate for the roofs, punctuated with spires and finials, as well as geometric, decorative patterns within the brickwork, indicate that this building was designed to make an aesthetic statement, using detailing typically found on churches in a secular, educational context in materials which would have been popular and easily accessible at the time contemporary at modern at the time.

The Water Fountain in the Market Place acts as a focal point for the area of open space it is within and is incorporated into the public realm as an object of interest and area of seating.

Baileys Gant, between 59 and 57 High Street, links the High Street to George Yard. The presence of the alleyway is an indicator of how the town developed, allowing for



the public to interact with built form in a kinetic, stimulating manner and providing an important access route for pedestrians.

The Picture Palace, once a cinema and now a pub, occupies a prominent position at the corner of Victoria Street and Fairfield Road. Although modified inside following its change of use, the building retains its large central volume and external appearance, with a curved frontage and Art Deco styling.

Braintree's two water towers, located on Swan Side, are visible throughout the townscape, acting as landmarks and way finders within the town centre. Both have been extended and are now flats.

Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

Many buildings within the Commercial Core are over two centuries old and timber framed, which limits their height and influences their external appearance. Although a large proportion of properties have been adapted and altered at ground floor level, on the upper floors the appearance of many properties remains largely unchanged, giving the Conservation Area a historical, traditional appearance. Buildings at the centre of the Character Area have undergone the most change, periphery buildings at the edges of the Character Area may be least altered, due to a multitude of factors.

In the second world war, Bank Street was hit by a bomb which destroyed properties on the eastern side of the road and led to the infill of buildings in the mid twentieth century; changes to agricultural commerce led to the closure of the cattle market and the creation of the Tesco supermarket on the site.

Roofs

Roofs are typically pitched, often concealed behind parapets and parallel to the

street. Where they do feature, gables are prominent and often indicative of early construction dates. Gables are normally simple, although there are examples of Dutch gables, used on the almshouses on St Michael's Road and The Corner House on Fairfield Road, both designed by E Vincent Harris.

Traditional, handmade, clay peg tiles are typical in the Character Area, with a double camber and affixed in a simple pattern.

Roof tiles are almost exclusively red in colour, in a rich palette of varied reddish, brown and orange tones. Roofs are typically steep, owing to their construction method, at around a 50° pitch. Decorative ridge tiles or finials are not common. Where they do feature, they are typically on buildings which were altered in, or date from, the Victorian period. Natural blue-grey slate is another feature typical of buildings from the Victorian period, and cementitious faux slate is not appropriate for the area. Buildings roofed in slate normally benefit from a shallower roof and deeper floorplans.

There are examples of flat roofs, which are normally consigned to service areas at the rear of commercial units or feature on infill buildings from the mid twentieth century. Pan and Roman tiles are uncommon on principal structures but may be found on outbuildings. More recent, twentieth century additions to the Conservation Area may feature cementitious tiles, which are generally incongruous and would benefit from replacement, yet where they are in an appropriate colour and tone, they are not visually distracting within the roofscape.

Chimneys enliven the roofscape, providing visual interest and further highlighting the age of buildings within the Character Area. Open rafters, decorative rafter feet, corncing, barge boards and fascias also add interest to the eaves details of building within in the Character Area.



Figure 59 Examples of different roof types within the Commercial Core Character Area. Flat roofs are not common, but where present, the flat roofed buildings are appropriately scaled to maintain the line of the roof scape, matching or sitting slightly under, the eaves height of neighbouring buildings



Walls

As much of the Character Area forms a continuous frontage, with buildings joined together, typically it is the flank of the building which is presented to the street. Render and brick are dominant within the Character Area, with some examples of exposed timber work. Render is typically painted in a neutral colour, and there is a prevailing palette of creams, off whites, pastel yellows and soft greys within the Character Area.

Pargetting (decorative render) features on a number of properties, and ranges from particularly elaborate to simple linear markings which imitate stonework. Cartouches, date and name plaques, as well as painted pediments and window surrounds, can often be found on upper floors.

Exposed timber framing on the exterior of buildings is atypical, yet where it is present, on the Swan Inn, for example, it adds a layer of texture and geometric linearity to the streetscape. Decorative beams intended for exposure, normally on jetties, can feature moulding and carvings.

Brickwork is also common in the Character area, either on buildings built from the nineteenth century onwards, or those heavily altered in this period. Red brick is most common, also featuring on brick plinths for timber framed and rendered buildings. Buff and brown brick do feature, yet are less common. Brick is typically laid in a Flemish bond, with flush pointing. Decorative brick panels, alternate courses, lintels and chamfered details on plinths and corners are common.

Stone is uncommon in the Character Area, due to the difficulties in transporting stone to the region. St Michael's Church is therefore distinctive, built in flint and Bath stone. Stone window surrounds, quoins or doorcases do feature on some buildings, normally

those built or altered to reflect the classical style and provide contrast to the brick or rendered walls of the building they feature on.

Wall mounted lighting is a feature of some commercial buildings, as are hanging signs. Satellite dishes and aerials are not a feature of the public realm.

Windows and Doors

Timber, single glazed, vertical sliding sash windows are dominant throughout the Character Area. Windows are typically smaller on higher floors, due to smaller room sizes and a hierarchy of room function and height.

Glazing bars, historic crown and cylinder glass can be found in the windows of many properties. An eight over eight pattern of sash windows is most common, but it is not dominant, there are examples of single pane sashes, side lights and many other arrangements of window panes.

Windows typically feature wooden surrounds, although stone sills are present. On brick faced buildings, an arched lintel is more common than flat. Metal framed casements produced by the Crittall firm are also common. Rooflights do not feature on street facing roof plains and the use of uPVC, on street facing elevations in particular, detracts from the character of the streetscape.

Dormer windows are not common, but where they do feature, they are not dominant within the roof scape. Gable pitches or flat, leaded roofs are used for dormers, featuring casement windows and a high ratio of glazing to render.

Doors vary in style within the Character Area, particularly where they are part of a shopfront. Timber is the dominant material for doors, featuring panelling and sections



Figure 60 Clockwise from top left: Examples of timber sash windows, High Street; Bow-front shop windows, Market Place, Braintree's first cinema, now British Heart Foundation, High Street; the High Street; An elaborate frontage, 13 Coggleshall Road; 34 New Street, a Grade II listed building; The Salvation Army Hall, Rayne Road.

of glazing. Composite or uPVC doors are not common, nor is the use of metal for primary doors within public areas. Porches and canopies are present on domestic dwellings, often featuring a pediment or flat canopy. Gabled porches, projecting from the building's façade, are incongruous where present.

Shopfronts

There are a variety of shopfronts in the Character Area, many of which are later insertions into older properties. In some cases, this means the shop front projects forward from the façade of the building, to create a deeper floorplan. Many shop fronts within the Character Area feature classical architectural details, such as cornicing and pilasters; shops predominantly feature a central doorway, often recessed.

The quality of shop fronts varies throughout the Character Area, however there are many good examples of shop fronts which engage the public with an active shop front, good maintenance and stimulating appearance.

Timber fascias and cills and the use of stall risers are typical on properties adapted in the Victorian period, when the shop front as we know it became commonplace. A high number of shop fronts within the Character Area are twentieth century imitations of Victorian designs, yet this style of shop front, featuring plates of glass contained within pilasters and decorative framing, adds interest and texture. Colours of shop fronts vary according to tenant, with whites and dark blacks, blues and greens common.

Floor to ceiling glazing is more common on buildings adapted in the mid to late twentieth century and often detracts from the overall appearance of buildings, drawing greater focus to the modern appearance of the ground floor which is at odds



Figure 61 Examples of Victorian shopfronts, High Street



Figure 62 Projecting shopfronts, Rayne Road



Figure 63 Projecting shopfronts, High Street



Figure 64 Shopfronts requiring improvement, Manor Street

with the character of the building it is within.

Signage is mixed, and there are examples of unsympathetic plastic fascia boards which detract from the quality of the street scene due to the material qualities of the fascias. Where present, timber fascia boards with hand painted signage adds to the quality of the area.

Some signs feature projecting lettering which can add a layer of texture to the sign, however the success of the signs depends on the materials used. Backlit or internally illuminated signage is not a feature of the Character Area, downlighters illuminate signage, combined with street lighting.

Boundary Treatments

There are few formal boundary treatments within the character area, as many properties directly front the street. The lack of boundary treatments is also indicative of building use, residential properties on periphery streets away from the commercial sections of the Character Area, such as St Michael's Lane, New Street or The Causeway may be set back behind small gardens.

Low lying brick walls are the most common boundaries to public areas, and taller walls feature at the rear of properties, demarking ownership lines. Brick is the dominant material for all boundaries, sometimes with a stone coping course. Public buildings, such as the Town Hall and St Michael's church are partially enclosed by areas of iron railings, however railings are not a common feature of the streetscape.

Public Realm

The public realm is large due to the commercial nature of the Character Area. Pathways and pedestrian pavements are generally large, encouraging high

pedestrian traffic. Bollards and highway systems discourage vehicular traffic, with large car parks preventing on-street car parking.

Street furniture is erratic in style, with evidence of many different phases of upgrading and replacement apparent. Lighting is provided by free standing lamps, which vary in quality.

Heritage style lampposts, with circular motifs on the rear arms and large hanging lamps are in place on the High Street which complement the character of the buildings within the street. Some properties also feature hanging lamps above doorways, which reinforces the historic character of the Conservation Area.

Benches and bike stands are scattered throughout the Character area, offering areas for respite, creating meeting points and encouraging non-vehicular traffic.

Paving is used throughout the Character Area to differentiate between roads and pedestrian pavements, with no curbs throughout the central section. Where retail and commercial units spill onto the pavement, through signage, stock or areas of outside seating, this makes the Character Area feel more dynamic and vibrant, positively encouraging public engagement with the space.

Views

Views toward landmark buildings within the Character Area are important as wayfinders, helping people to navigate their way around the town centre. Due to their height, the water towers and the spire of St Machel's Church are visible throughout the Character Area and, where gained, incidental views toward these buildings add to the overall experience of the Character Area. Other important views include along



Figure 65 Walls and railings, Braintree Town Hall



Figure 66 Area of seating and the town sign, Bank Street



Figure 67 Heritage style lamp post

the High Street and Bank Street, from where it is possible to experience and view a variety of architectural styles. Views toward the Town Hall, across the market place provide a contrast to the density of development on the High Street, whilst views across both car parks also allow for an appreciation of the pattern of development within the Character Area and sense of openness, compared to when within the core of the Character Area.

From the junction of the High Street and South Street, it is possible to gain wide views of the town, looking across towards St Michael's Church and the Mills Character Area. Views from this point allow the viewer to look across the valley toward the river basin, and the fall in land coupled with the low height of buildings at this junction emphasises the prominence of the church.

Views toward the Character Area can be gained from lower points, whereby the topography emphasises the gradual increase in building density. This is particularly noticeable when looking south on the Causeway and north on Fairfield Road, where the land and building heights rise toward the market place and epicentre of the town.

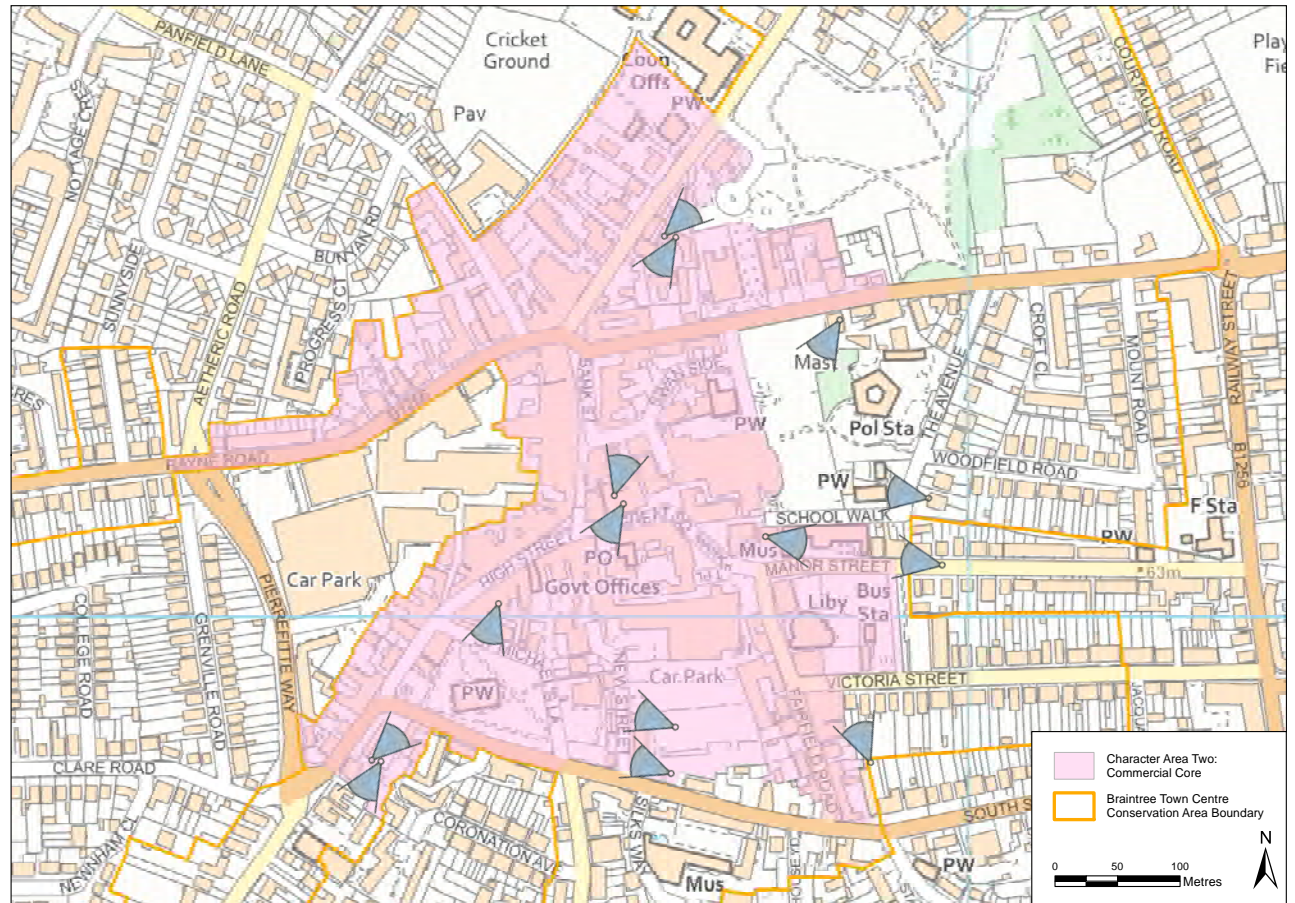


Figure 68 Map of important views within the Commercial Core Character Area

3.2.3. The Mills

Description

The Mills Character area encompasses a section of Notley Road, Pound End Mill and the New Mills complex at the southern edge of the Conservation Area. Pound End Mill, now flats but more recently in use as Tesco Garden centre, was built in 1819 by the Courtauld firm as a silk throwing mill, only for the Courtauld's to move their operation entirely to Bocking six months later. Daniel Walters, a London silk manufacturer, was in situ by 1822. His business quickly gained a reputation for producing high end upholstery silks, and, despite fluctuations in the silk trade, expanded. The New Mills complex on the southern side of the road was completed in 1877 for the Walters Firm, changing hands to the Warner company in 1895. Warners specialised in the use of hand looms, creating the silk for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

The mill buildings are timber framed and clad with white weatherboarding and occupy a significant portion of South Street. The mills represent important changes in manufacturing methods during the industrial revolution and are unusual examples of their type, featuring large expanses of high level glazing and a horizontal emphasis. Their presence meant that this section of the town centre was predominantly working class in the nineteenth century, with workers living close by in notoriously poor conditions. Examples of such housing is included within the Character Area on Notley Road, although the conditions have greatly improved since the Victorian period and peak point of silk manufacture in Braintree.

The appearance of Notley Road is pleasant and domestic, with terraced and semi-detached houses set back behind small front gardens. Other buildings within the character area include structures associated with the mill and houses. The mill closed

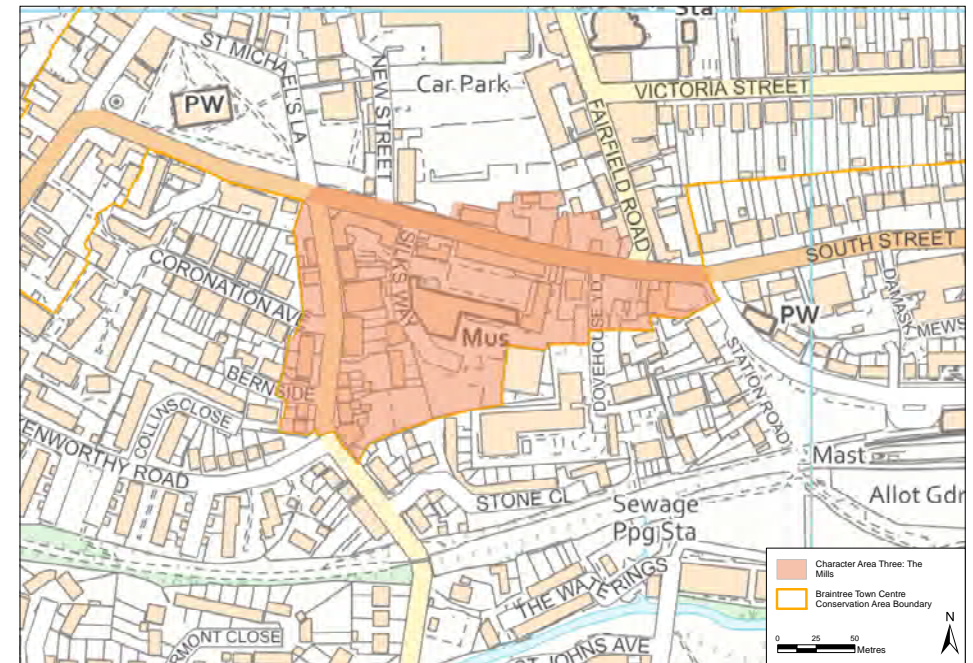


Figure 69 Map of The Mills Character Area (shown in orange)



Figure 70 Notley Road, looking north



Figure 71 The Mills

in 1971, with the majority of the mill buildings converted to residential flats in the early twenty first century. A modern block of flats, to the west of the original buildings, creates a U shape to the buildings, creating a courtyard and sense of enclosure.

The Warner Textile Archive is located to the rear of the main mill building, within a single storey building with a saw tooth roof. The museum provides insight into the history of the cloth trade in Braintree and is a valuable resource, aiding in the interpretation of the Conservation Area's significance.

Layout and Land Usage

The layout of the character area is focussed on the New Mills buildings on South Street, which are arranged in a courtyard formation [Figure 71]. This courtyard is not visible from South Street, creating a sense of enclosure and containment within the mills complex.

Pound End Mill, on the northern side of South Street has a visible relationship with New Mills, featuring the same materials and design. This relationship enforces the understanding of this section of South Street as distinct from the Commercial Core Character Area.

The northern section of Notley Road included within the Conservation Area runs south from South Street; the Character Area's boundary on Notley Road is at the road's kink, at the junction with Kenworthy Road.

Buildings are almost entirely residential, with the exception of the Warner Textile Archive. Offices and commercial buildings are present on Silks Way, contained within buildings that have a domestic appearance.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

Landscaping is minimal, with open spaces often the result of a lack of development. Open spaces are predominantly used as car parks and incidental to the character of the area. Better use of these areas to provide a public focus to the street scene would be beneficial. Tarmac and gravel dominates areas of open space, giving the Character Area an urban appearance, largely devoid of planting and featuring few trees.

At the junction of Fairfield Road and South Street, a corner plot on the north western side has been developed as a small respite area, with benches planters and interpretation boards which provide a brief history of the textile industry in Braintree [Figure 72].

Decorative panels affixed to boundary walls in the park feature prints from the Warner archive, giving a visual link to the industry once present in the area. From this area of open space it is also possible to gain views across the rooftops of buildings within the Character Area from an oblique angle.

Properties on Notley road benefit from private gardens to the front, providing a set back from the street, and to the rear. Planting is minimal in this area, with landscaping confined to private garden areas.

Key Buildings

The key buildings within the character area are the street fronting mill buildings, their height and blank frontage providing a striking contrast to other buildings on the road and in the wider Conservation Area. Accessed from the side or rear, buildings within the mill complex are insular and interconnected, with their proximity to each other indicative of their once shared function and ownership.



Figure 72 Pocket Park, South Street

Figure 73



Figure 74 New Mills (left hand side) and Pund End Mill (right hand side), all Grade II listed



Figure 75 68 and 70 South Street, both Grade II listed



Figure 76 Terraced cottages, Notley Road



Figure 77 Pound End Mill, South Street, Grade II listed

Designated

The New Mills Complex benefits from a group listing which includes the three blocks. Pound End Mill, on the northern side of South Street, is separately listed [Figure 74].

There are three other listed buildings within the Character Area: 68 and 70 South Street, 66 South Street and The Angel Inn, Notley Road. 66-70 South Street [Figure 75].are part of the New Mills group, however they pre-date the mill buildings. 68 and 70 is typical in appearance for Braintree, and is a timber framed and rendered building. 66 South Street is brick built with a Mansard roof, uncommon within the region.

The Angel Inn, 85 Notley Road is a seventeenth century timber framed building, extended in subsequent centuries. No longer in use as a public house, the building occupies a prominent position on the road's curve, and is evidential of the Braintree's history as a market town, where inns contributed to the town's economy, housing visiting traders and customers.

Non-designated

Other buildings within the Character Area which provide an indicator of the area's industrial history contribute to the overall appearance of the area and help to reveal its significance. These include the works at number 10 Notley Road, a sawtooth roofed building built in brick.

Nineteenth century cottages on Notley Road [Figure 76] and Silks Way also contribute to the appearance of the Character Area and have a group value, providing context to the former factory buildings.

Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

Building materials in The Mills Character Area are typical of the wider Conservation Area, with one key difference which is the heavy use of cladding on the old mill buildings. Traditional materials dominate, with modern developments making reference to the built heritage of the Character Area through the use of complimentary brick, for example, and other architectural details.

Roofs

Roofs are pitched, and in the case of the mill buildings, expansive. Built as single ranges, the mill buildings are block like and comparatively tall which makes their roofs particularly prominent. Slate is common in this character area, more so than tile which is prominent in the Commercial Core Character area.

The predominance of slate is indicative of the mills' build date – slate grew in popularity in the nineteenth century, when increased travel links and the advent of the rail network allowed for better transportation of slate from Wales and the north of England into regions where it is not quarried.

Tiles are found on domestic dwellings, made from clay and featuring a red-orange tone. In contrast to the slate, the tiles provide colour and add vibrancy to the roofscape.

Chimneys are common on domestic buildings, with cupola style vents on the mill buildings. These were used to provide ventilation to the factories, which have few opening windows.

Walls

The mill buildings are clad in feather edged timber boarding with a brick plinth.



Figure 78 South Street, looking west toward St Michael's church



Figure 79 Saw-tooth roof, otley Road



Figure 80 White painted weatherboarding on the Mill, with timber single glazed windows



Figure 81 Red brick, South Street



Figure 82 Examples of pebble dash and red brick, Notley Road

Painted white, the cladding is striking and a distinct contrast from ancillary buildings or former agricultural units within the Conservation Area which are also clad but painted black, as was common historically. Barns were typically covered in tar as it was hard wearing and easily cleaned.

Brick is used for the brick plinths of the mill buildings and other structures within the Conservation Area. Red brick in a Flemish bond is used for the mill structures and associated boundary walls; buff and yellow brick features on other buildings within the Character Area, with contrasting brick colours used to pick out details such as window surrounds, lintels and quoins.

Render and painted brick are also present, in a variety of off-white tones. Pebble dash is used on properties on Notley Road, complementing the buff, light brown brick used throughout the street.

Windows and Doors

The windows on the converted mill buildings along South Street are a mix of timber framed sashes at ground floor level, with top light casements on higher floors, featuring glazing bars and small panes of glass. Buildings to the rear, set back from the road, feature only casements. The dominance of the glazing gives a horizontal emphasis to the mill buildings, with a homogenous, linear character.

Windows on surrounding streets would have once been almost exclusively timber, however there are examples of modern uPVC windows throughout the Character Area. Where present, these detract from the quality of the building they are in, often failing to adequately mimic the dimensions or patterns of windowpanes they seek to mimic.

Properties on the western edge of Notley Road feature bay windows; the prevailing

window style is flush with the wall plate and rebated window reveals do not feature prominently. Doors within the Character Area are typically timber and panelled, some properties feature doors with glazed panels.

Side lights within the wall plate and projecting porches are not common, with flat roof canopies typically offering weather cover; the majority of buildings feature no porch or canopy over their entrances.

Storm porches, where present, add depth and interest to the streetscape. Removal or infilling of storm porches, as well as the addition of porch extensions disrupts the rhythm of the street, detracting from its character.

Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments are minimal, with brick walls being the most common. Where present, brick walls are high and on South Street in particular they emphasise the tunnel-like, blank frontages created by the mill buildings.

Timber picket fences, iron railings and hedgerow are present on Notley Road, to demark front boundaries and further emphasise the domestic character of the street. Rationalisation of these elements, as well as general maintenance, would benefit the Character Area. Areas of low lying hedge are most prominent within the mills building complex, adding a green border to the car park and separating pedestrian and vehicular traffic

Public Realm

With the exception of the small pocket park at the corner of Rainsford Road and South Street, public realm is confined to pavements, roads and pedestrian pathways. A description of the park is within the Landscaping and Open Spaces section.



Figure 83 Examples of porch extensions and railings



Figure 84 Examples of porches and brick boundary walls



Figure 85 View along South Street



Figure 86 Examples of uPVC windows

Street furniture is eclectic, with bollards featuring within the mills buildings, as well as sections of railings, barriers and gates to increase privacy and provide traffic calming measures

Lighting is sporadic, with standard streetlamps providing no visual interest. Road signage is clustered at junctions and could be refined; telephone cabling is prominent at the eastern edge of the Character Area, stretching along South Street, outside of the Conservation Area boundary. The reduction or rationalisation of road signage would be of benefit.

Views

Public views toward the mill buildings, along South Street, are of particular importance within the Character Area. Other views toward St Michael's Church and Fairfield Road are also important in providing context to the Character Area and allow for an understanding of the Character Area's position in relation to other sections of the Conservation Area. Within the New Mills complex, views are restricted, emphasising the scale and appearance of the mill buildings.

From within the buildings, particularly on higher floors, it is possible to gain wide views southwards into the valley of the river Brain and north into the town centre.

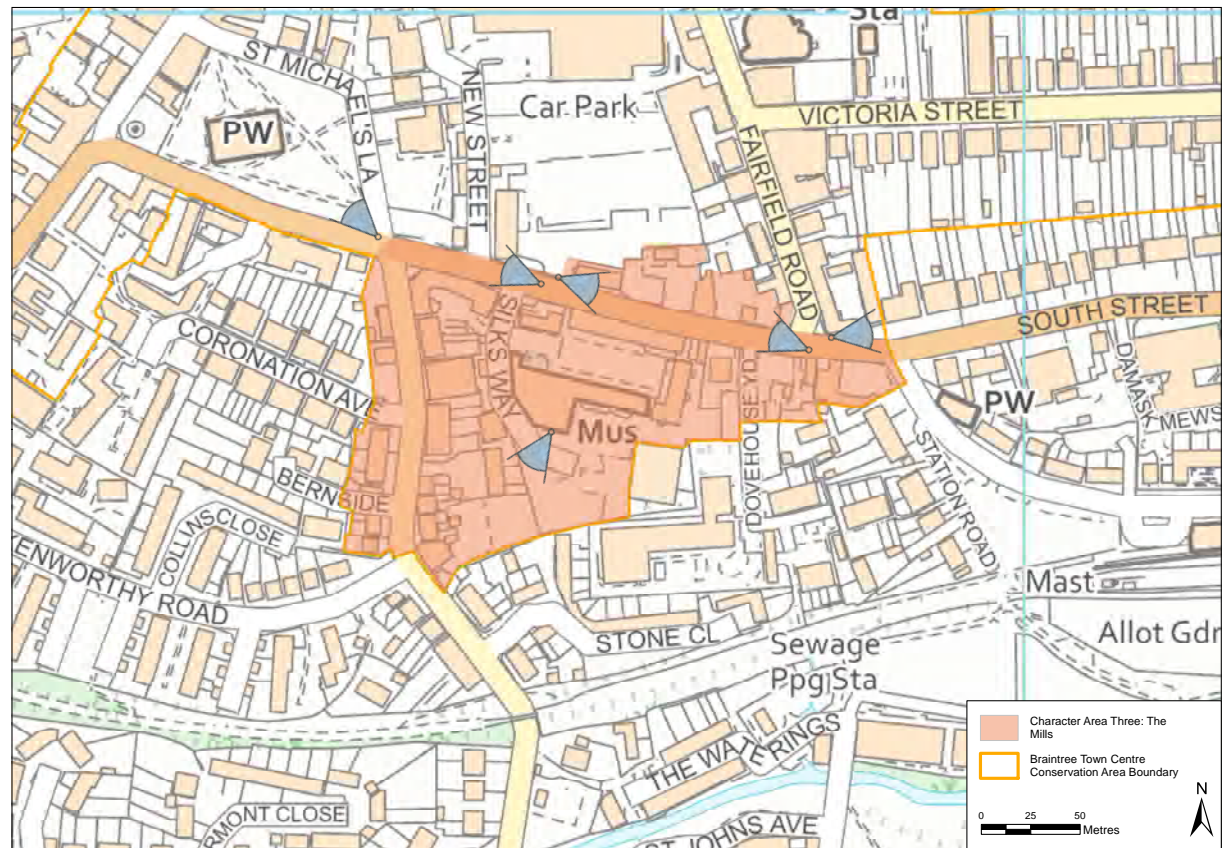


Figure 87 Map showing important views in the Character Area

3.2.4. Victoria Street, Mount Road and Woodfield Road

Description

Victoria Street, Mount Road and Woodfield Road were built between the late nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century, part of the town's expansion following an increase in industry and the coming of the railway. Homes were built within the area to provide accommodation for workers in the nearby factories, and there is a variety in the accommodation offered on the streets, including terraced houses, semi-detached pairs and detached dwellings.

The streets are residential in character, with their layout indicative of the speculative way in which they were built. Buildings are clustered in small rows and terraces, set back from the road, creating a suburban appearance. Minor variations in style and detailing provide interest across the street scene, yet the overall appearance is homogenous and unified, due to the limited palette of materials used externally and lack of variation in building height.

As examples of houses from the period, the buildings within this Character Area provide a visual link to Braintree's past and development following its establishment as a medieval market town. The character area is an important contrast to other sections of the Conservation Area, featuring exclusively residential brick buildings. From the character area there is easy access into the town centre, bus and train station and there is good connectivity to other sections of the Conservation Area. Properties possess large rear gardens, which provide a green backdrop to the streetscape and emphasise the Character Area's suburban character.

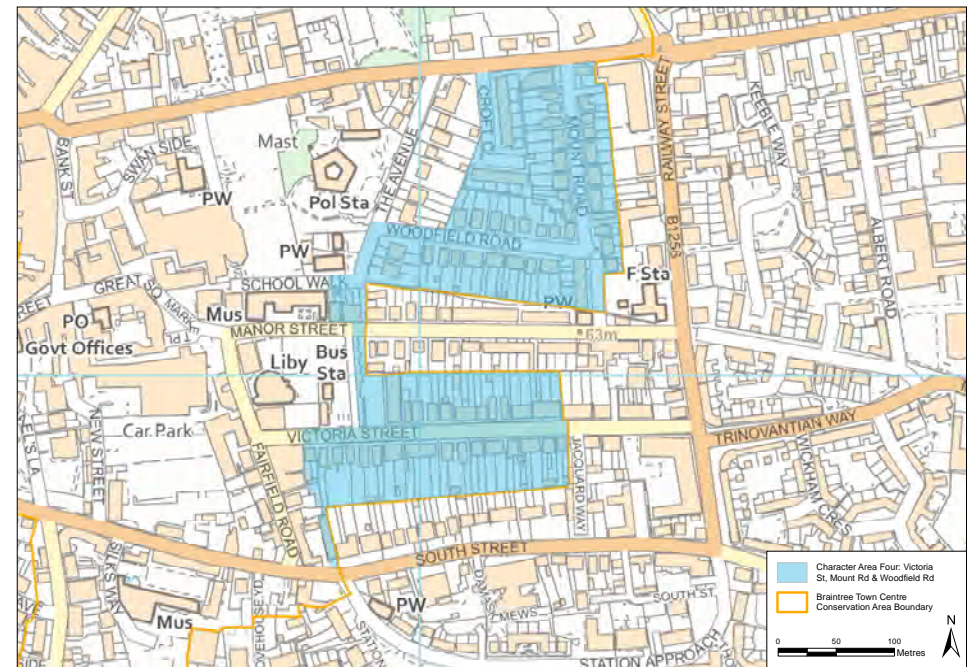


Figure 88 Map showing the Victoria Street, Mount Road and Woodfield Road Character Area, depicted in blue

Layout and Land Usage

The layout of the character area remains unchanged since the houses were constructed. Straight lines of houses are a contrast to the curves and bends of older streets, indicating their deliberate phasing and layout. Properties feature rear gardens and are set back from the street behind small areas of garden or driveway, in contrast to older sections of the Conservation Area where properties are accessed directly off of the pavement.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

Landscaping and open spaces are not a dominant feature of the character area. Where present, areas of open space are incidental and often the result of demolition or a hesitancy to develop corner plots, which would result in a crowded streetscape and poor visibility for road users.

Key Buildings

Designated

There are no designated buildings within the Character Area.

Non-designated

Non-designated buildings which make a positive contribution to the Character area are those which retain a high number of original features, such as their front door or timber windows. Buildings dating from the Edwardian period are particularly decorative, featuring panelled coloured glass windows within the front door, for example.



Figure 89 Terraced houses, Mount Road



Figure 90 Victoria Street



Figure 91 Roofs on Woodfield Road

Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

Brick is the only visible building material in the Character Area and is a reflection of the build date of the properties within it. The industrialisation of brick manufacturing methods in the Victorian period allowed for bricks to be produced quickly and cheaply, meaning houses could be built quicker than ever before.

Roofs

Roofs are pitched and run parallel to the street, with gable ends visible on corners and on side returns. Bay windows and gable details do feature on the street facing elevation of some properties, predominantly on larger, semidetached houses, closer to the town centre. These gables break up the appearance of the street scene, adding visual interest to the roofline.

Chimneys are prevalent, reflecting the build date of the properties within the Character Area. Chimney pots have been removed on some dwellings, yet most are retained, with chimney stacks typically featuring six or more terracotta chimney pots, simple in style without cowls.

Slate would have been the only roof covering when the streets within the Character Area were built and remains the most common. Buildings which have been reroofed are mostly clad in cementitious brown interlocking concrete tiles, typical of the late twentieth century.

Rooflights and photovoltaic (solar) panels are present but are not common, whilst bargeboards, decorative courses at eaves level, faux timber framing on the apex of gables and finials add interest to the roofscape.



Figure 92 Example of decorative brickwork

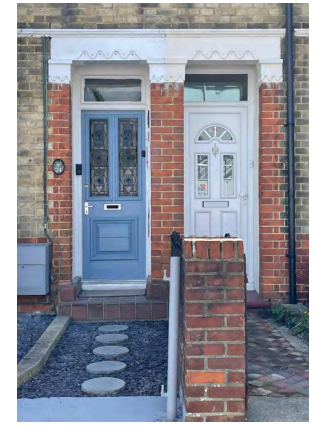


Figure 93 Example of doors



Figure 94 Example of doors



Figure 95 Example of solar panels within the Character Area



Figure 96 Examples of gardens paved over to provide off street parking



Figure 97 Example of a name plate



Figure 98 The loss of front gardens has removed greenery from the street



Figure 99 Example of a sash window

Walls

Brick is the primary building material within the Character Area and is used for all dwellings. Outbuildings and ancillary structures, such as garages, may be constructed in blockwork and rendered. The brick bond (the pattern in which the bricks are laid) is typically Flemish, indicating that many buildings within the Character Area do not feature cavity walls.

Red brick and buff or gault brick are used throughout the Character Area, often both on the same façade with the differing colours used to pick out details and add decoration. Arched brick lintels are present on doors and windows and string courses, quoin details, decorative brick plaques or nameplates [Figure 97] are commonplace. Brickwork has been painted in places; however, this can cause damage to properties, preventing adequate ventilation. The painting of brickwork which is currently exposed is not recommended. Side returns are often in a different brick type and are more commonly painted.

Windows and Doors

Timber sash windows are dominant [Figure 99], although these have been replaced by top hung or centrally opening casement uPVC units on some properties. Bay windows are common, framed with stone surrounds and decorative detailing, such as scrolls and pilasters.

Doors are often recessed, within storm porches which add depth to the street scene. Timber doors, as with windows, are most common, but there are examples of composite and uPVC replacements.

Timber doors, where present, are often original and panelled, some featuring glazing. There are good examples of decorative Edwardian doors within the Character Area,

featuring coloured glass in ornamental patterns.

Side lights within the wall plate and projecting porches are not common, the majority of buildings feature no porch or canopy over their entrances

Boundary Treatments

Low lying brick walls, hedgerow, metal railings or timber fences are present, and there is no overriding boundary treatment within the Character Area. Gates have typically been removed or were never installed.

Properties are set back from the pavement, behind small front gardens. In some cases, these have been converted to driveways which removes vehicles from the road, yet the resultant loss of planting has an urbanising effect [Figure 96].

Quarry tiles laid in geometric patterns are used to add decoration to some paths [Figure 100], and where they are present, they add a layer of visual interest to the streetscene. As with other surviving original architectural elements, they reinforce the late Victorian character of the area.

Public Realm

The public realm within the Character Area is limited to the roads and pavements, with a small pedestrian cut though between the centre of Mount Road, where it adjoins Woodfield Road.

Street furniture is restricted to traffic signs and lamp posts, which are generic and do not contribute positively to the overall appearance of the area.

Domestic bins are a feature of the street scene, typically stored at the front of



Figure 100 Decorative paths add colour, texture and vibrancy to the street scene



Figure 101 Example of a retained hedge boundary



Figure 102 Manor Street development under construction, summer 2021

properties, on driveways or in front gardens.

Parking is predominantly on road, in demarked bays, with some houses benefitting from off street parking, following the loss of their front gardens.

Telephone cables criss-cross the street, reinforcing the older character of the area. Satellite dishes, where present, detract from the architectural quality of the character area, as do poorly placed meter boxes.

Views

Views within the Character Area are confined to views along the streetscape, there are no opportunities to gain meaningful long views across the Character Area into other sections of the Conservation Area.

Throughout the Character Area, the continuous roof height of buildings creates channelled, focussed views which reinforce the homogenous nature of the streetscape, with built form stretching forward east away from the Town Centre. This is an important contrast to the winding, non-linear block plan of the Commercial Core and older sections of the town centre. Currently under construction, the development on Manor Street, to the rear of the Town Hall, will be visible on Victoria Street once completed. As a landmark new development for the town, it will serve as a prominent, contemporary addition to the streetscene.

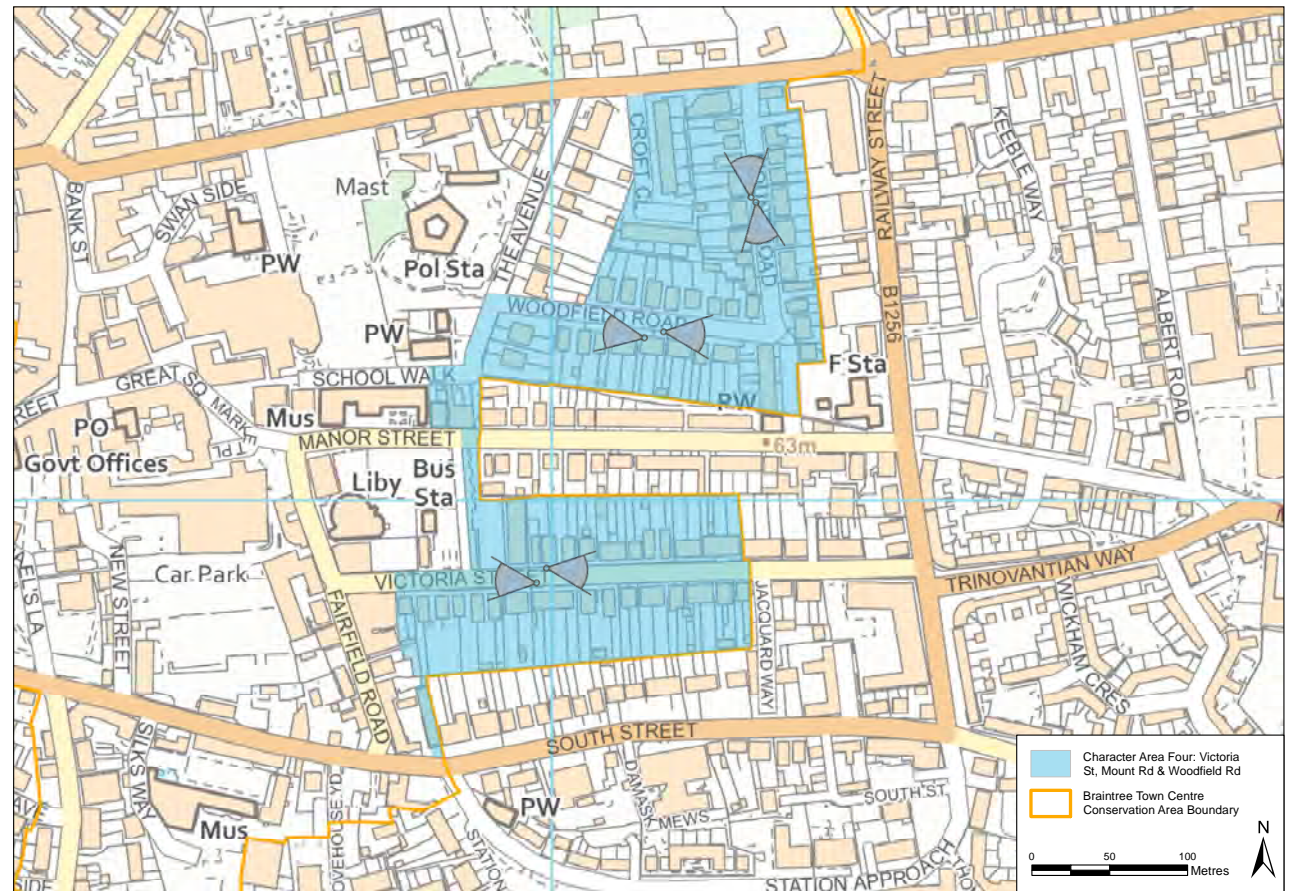


Figure 103 Map showing important views within the Character Area

3.2.5. Rayne Road

Description

Rayne Road Character Area is on the north western side of the Conservation Area and includes sections of nineteenth century development, west of the junction with Pierrefiette Way. A small section of Sunnyside, a nineteenth century development of houses accessed via Rayne Road, is also within the Character Area. Rayne Road, as indicated by its name, connects Braintree to Rayne, a small village approximately two miles to the west of Braintree town centre. At one point in history Rayne was the bigger settlement of the two, with Braintree overtaking as the larger settlement following its granting of a market character in the mediaeval period.

Rayne Road follows the line of Stane Street, a Roman road which ran laterally across the northern section of modern Essex. Despite the road's ancient origins, it was not developed until the Victorian period; buildings within the character area date from the mid to late nineteenth century. The former workhouse site on Old St Micheal's Drive was purposefully built away from the town centre, although it is now an integral part of the landscape of the Conservation Area and history of the town. Properties on Peel Crescent are excluded from the Character Area as it lacks the architectural or historic interest of the remainder of Rayne Road.

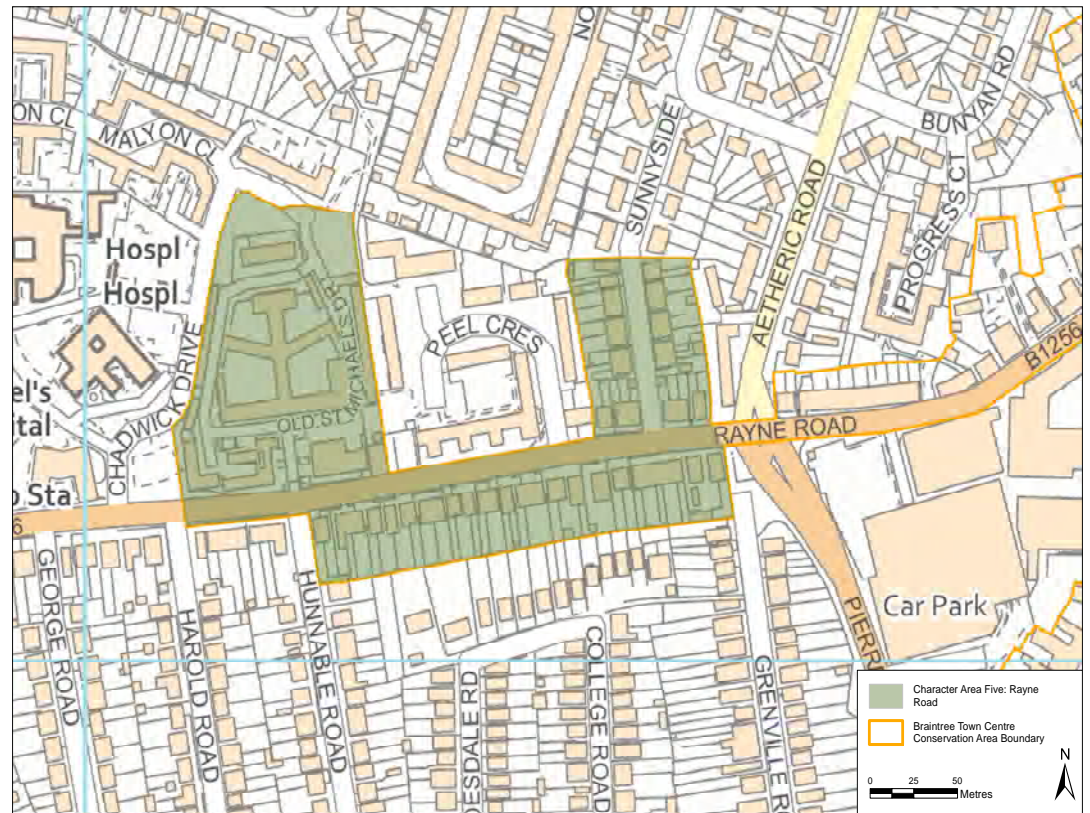


Figure 104 Map of the Rayne Road Character Area

Layout and Land Usage

Land usage is almost exclusively residential, a doctors' surgery within the St Michael's complex is the only nondomestic building. Detached, semidetached and terraced buildings feature within the Character area. The proximity of buildings to each other and continuous building height create a sense of homogeneity and the appearance of a continuous, unbroken street frontage, despite the presence of semidetached pairs of houses.

Old St Michael's Drive, the former workhouse is arranged in a circular formation, looping around the building. The layout of the Character Area is, however, largely linear, with Rayne Road running east-west; Sunnyside is perpendicular to Rayne Road, heading north.

Peel Crescent, on the northern side of Rayne Road, is excluded from the Character area as it is a twentieth century development which does not reflect the special interest of the Conservation Area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

There are no areas of public open space and landscaping is minimal, reserved for private garden areas. Rayne Road is wide, which gives a sense of space, albeit often dominated by traffic which can be congested in peak periods. In comparison, Sunnyside is narrower and a dead end for vehicles, meaning there is no through traffic.



Figure 105 View east on Rayne Road toward the Commercial Core Character Area and the town's water towers (centre)



Figure 106 Peel Crescent, excluded from the Conservation Area



Figure 107 St Michael's Hospital, seen from the rear. The building is Grade II listed and now converted to flats



Figure 108 Rayne Road, looking east



Figure 109 Examples of red brick and gardens removed to facilitate off road parking, Rayne Road

Key Buildings

Designated

St Michael's Hospital [Figure 18], the town's former workhouse, is Grade II listed. Built in 1837, the projecting central block of the building is three storeys in height, built in red brick and featuring a hipped slate roof. Later twentieth century wings flank the central block, and sympathetic, well executed modern houses have been constructed within the grounds.

Non-designated

Non-designated buildings which make a positive contribution to the Character area are those which retain a high number of original features, such as their front door or timber windows.

Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

Much like other sections of the Conservation Area which were built in the nineteenth century, brick is the primary building material in the Character Area. This reinforces the architectural quality of the streetscape, indicative of the prevalent building methods at the point in which properties in the Character Area were constructed.

Roofs

Roofs are pitched and run parallel to the street, with gable ends visible on corners and on side returns. Gable details do not feature on the street facing elevation of properties, with the exception of 99 Rayne Road [Figure 109], but there are examples of detached, hipped roofed dwellings.

The hipped roof of Michael's Hospital is prominent in the street, due to the building's elevated height compared to surrounding structures and projecting nature of the front block.

Chimneys are prevalent, reflecting the build date of the properties within the Character Area. Chimney pots have been removed on some dwellings, yet most are retained, with chimney stacks typically featuring terracotta chimney pots, simple in style without cowls.

Slate would have been the only roof covering when the streets within the Character Area were built and remains present. Many buildings have been reroofed in cementitious, brown interlocking tiles, typical of the late twentieth century which dilute the character of the area.

Rooflights are not a typical feature of the Character Area.

Walls

Brick is the primary building material within the Character Area and is used throughout. Some properties are rendered, which breaks up the appearance of terraces. Outbuildings and ancillary structures, such as garages, may be constructed in blockwork and rendered or clad.

Red brick and buff or gault brick are used throughout the Character Area, often both on the same façade with the differing colours used to pick out details and add decoration. Arched brick lintels are present on doors and windows, whilst contrasting bricks are commonplace for the string courses and quoin details [Figure 111].

Brickwork has been painted in places; however, this can cause damage to properties, preventing adequate ventilation. The painting of brickwork which is currently exposed



Figure 110 Examples of rendered buildings which disrupt the uniformity of the street scene



Figure 111 Example of a bay window and decorative brick detailing on doors



Figure 112 Example of timber sashes (second left) and uPVC replacements (right)



Figure 113 Chimneys and telephone wires add visual interest to the skyline



Figure 114 Example of a bay window



is not recommended. Side returns are often in a different brick type and are more commonly painted.

Windows and Doors

Timber sash windows have been replaced by top hung or centrally opening casement uPVC units on almost all properties on Rayne Road and Sunnyside. Where they are still present, timber sash windows provide texture and are a link to the street's original appearance. Bay windows are common, framed with stone surrounds and decorative detailing, such as scrolls, moulded bricks and pilasters. Bays feature pitched slate or brown tiled roofs and are present on the ground floor only.

Within St Michael's Drive there are examples of Crittall metal windows, with timber windows most common, featuring on the modern dwellings within the complex. On the listed building there are examples of arched windows, which are unusual within the Conservation Area and add to the building's Classical appearance.

Doors are often recessed, within storm porches which add depth to the street scene. Where these have been infilled, it removes depth and flattens the façade of street fronting elevations. Timber doors, as with windows would have been installed originally, but there are examples of composite and uPVC replacements. Timber doors, where present, are often original and panelled, some featuring glazing. Side lights within the wall plate and projecting porches are not common. Porch extensions are most common on Sunnyside, and have been executed in varying levels of success. The majority of buildings feature no porch or canopy over their entrances.

Boundary Treatments

Low lying brick walls, hedgerow, metal railings or timber fences are present, and there is no overriding boundary treatment within the Character Area. Gates have typically been removed or were never installed. Properties are set back from the pavement, behind small front gardens. In some cases, these have been converted to driveways which removes vehicles from the road, yet the resultant loss of planting has an urbanising affect.

Quarry tiles laid in decorative patterns are used aesthetically on some paths, and where they are present, they add a layer of visual interest to the streetscene.

As with other surviving original architectural elements, they reinforce the late Victorian character of the area.

Public Realm

The public realm within the Character Area is limited to the roads and pavements, with bus stops and laybys prominent on Rayne Road. Street furniture is restricted to traffic signs and lamp posts, which are generic and do not contribute positively to the overall appearance of the area.

Telephone cables are a feature of the streetscape, stretching between houses as shown on Figure 113.

Views

From Rayne Road it is possible to gain views of the Commercial Core Character Area, with the town centre’s water towers prominent due to their height. The third, smaller, tower is part of George Yard, in filling the gap between the two towers with a similar, conical roof.

From Rayne Road it is possible to gain a sense of arriving at the town’s centre, and with George Yard also prominent.

The junction of Pierrefiette Way, Rayne Road and Aetheric Road is a wide area of road, with central pedestrian islands and multiple crossing points. As part of the town centre ring road, this alleviates traffic in the Commercial Core, but detracts from the character of Rayne Road and the approach into the Character Area. Views towards St Michael’s Drive are also important, with the building’s set back, gates and associated landscaping adding a formal, institutional quality to the Character Area.

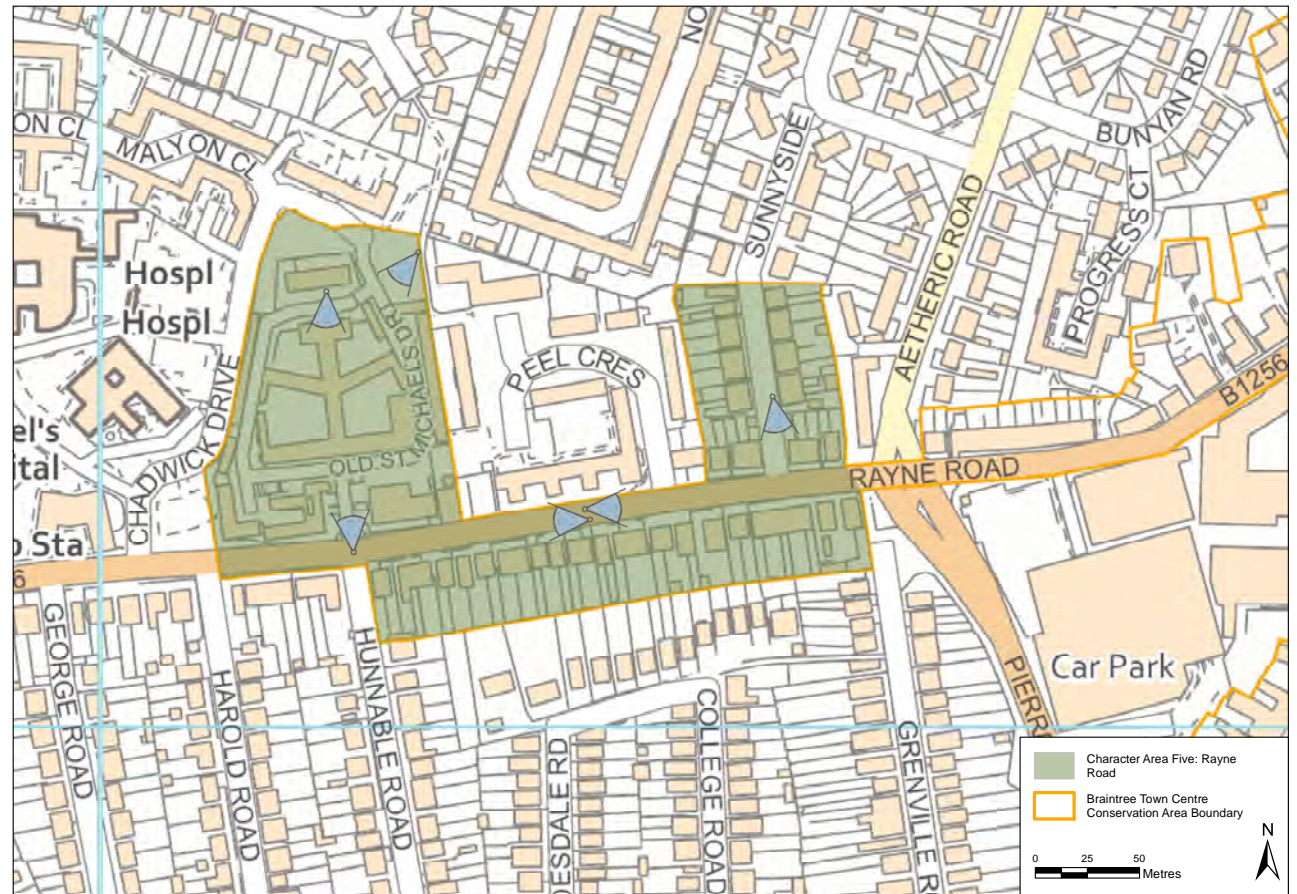


Figure 115 Map of important views within the Rayne Road Character Area



3.2.6. The Parks

Description

The Parks Character Area encompasses the north eastern section of the Conservation Area. This section of the town was developed in the nineteenth to early twentieth century and marks the coalescence of Braintree and Bocking, infilling the gap between the two settlements as Braintree town centre expanded along Bocking End toward Bradford Street.

The character area takes its name from the municipal parks within the Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area, Weavers Park, located between Coggeshall Road and Bocking End, and Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens, located off Bocking End, on the northern side. Surrounding areas of housing, St Peters in the Fields and Our Lady Queen of Peace churches, and the Howard Hall Masonic Centre are also within the character area, as well as a small number of commercial buildings and the Braintree Police Station. Built form is more generously spaced in The Parks Character Area than other sections of the Conservation Area, many buildings are detached within spacious grounds.

The two parks differ in character, Weavers Park is largely open areas of lawn and features a skate park and changing rooms. Weaver’s park is used primarily for sport and as a green pedestrian cut through from Coggeshall Road to the northern section of the town and Bocking. In contrast, Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens are gated and only accessible via two entrances on Bocking End at set times, which vary throughout the year.

Deliberate landscaping and planting segregates sections of the gardens into deliberate zones according to use: tennis courts in the eastern section of the park

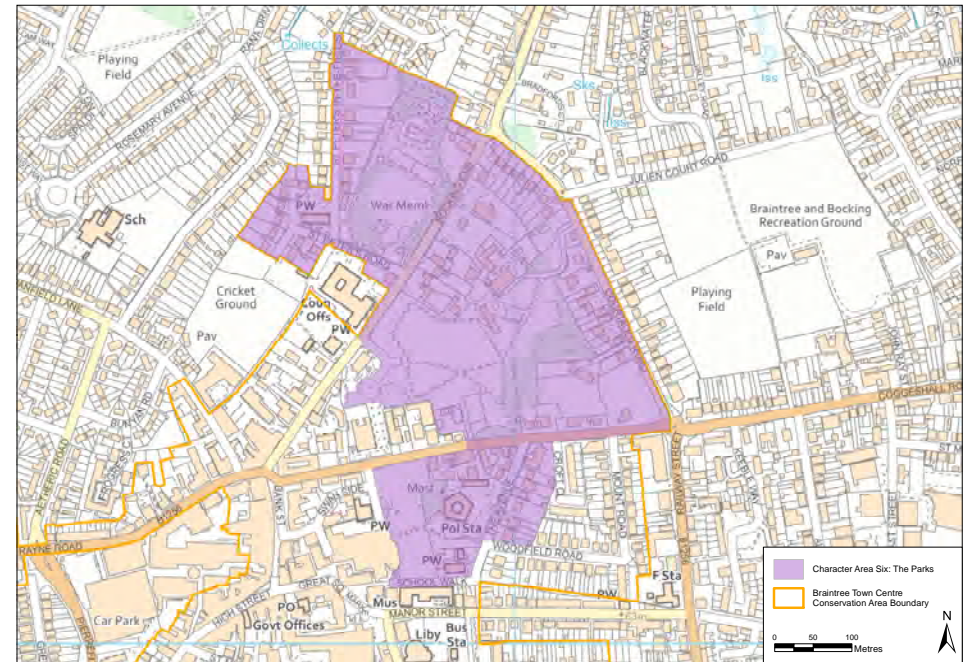


Figure 116 Map of The Parks Character Area

are partially concealed by tree cover, benches offer respite around the central green, orientated toward the thatched band stand. Both parks share the same origins despite their differing appearance, having been gifted to the town by its prominent benefactors, the Courtauld Family who owned Bocking Place, a large house set back from The Causeway (Bocking End) which had been entirely rebuilt by Sydney Courtauld in the late 1880s.

The park once formed Bocking Place's grounds. Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens opened to public in 1888, following a donation to the town by Sydney and his wife Sarah.

Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area is bounded by Coggeshall Road on its eastern edge, which marks the edge of the Conservation Area. Coggeshall Road runs east west across the southern section of the Character Area, with Bocking End (The Causeway) crossing north east, running diagonally from the core of Bank Street, within the Commercial Core Character Area. Land use is primarily recreational park space, with areas of housing on splinter streets of the main roads: The Avenue, St Peter's in the Fields and Courtauld Road. Buildings are generously spaced, with houses almost exclusively detached.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

Weaver's Park and Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens are open to the public, providing important recreational space within the town centre. Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens are managed by a charitable trust, who maintain and administer the space. Weaver's Park is maintained by the local authority. Both are accessed through formal gateways, bound by a combination of railings, hedgerow and planting.



Figure 117 Weaver's Park



Figure 118 The Play Area, Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens



Figure 119 The Skate Park, Weaver's Park



Figure 120 Listed buildings, Coggeshall Road



Figure 121 19 Coggeshall Road, Grade II listed

Both parks feature areas of open grass and there is a spacious, generous proportion to the parks. Land levels are predominantly flat, which allows for good visibility across the areas when stood in both parks. Landscaping and planting is a prominent feature of the Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens; both parks feature designated pedestrian pathways which provide routes through the parks and offer visual interest, creating a sense of surprise when users arrive at various areas and features of the parks. Mature trees offer shade and interest to areas of grass.

A skate park and changing rooms feature in Weaver's Park, whilst Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens include tennis courts, a play area and banc stand. These features encourage public engagement with the space, providing areas for recreation and activity.

There are other areas of open space within the Character Area surrounding the Character Area's two churches, St Peter's in the Fields and the Catholic Church of Our Lady, Queen of the Peace (see Figure 109). These church yards offer a sense of separation and quiet for both religious buildings, particularly in the case of Our Lady, Queen of the Peace, the western edge of which adjoins the neighbouring supermarket's car park.

Key Buildings

Designated

There are six designations within The Parks Character Area. All are Grade II and, with the exception of St Peter's in the Fields Church, located on Coggeshall Road. The listed buildings on Coggeshall Road date from the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

They are examples of domestic houses, typical in build and character for the Conservation Area. Together, the buildings possess a group value and are indicative

of the development of the town centre away from the medieval core.

Non-designated

Non designated buildings which retain a high number of original features contribute positively to the appearance of the Character Area. On Coggeshall Road, The Avenue, Courtauld Road and St Peter's in the Fields there a high number of such buildings, which are often adorned with decorative details such as glass panelled doors, feature windows, moulded brick courses, bargeboards, roof finials and decorative eaves details.

The Catholic Church of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, located at the corner of School Walk and The Avenue opened in 1939, and is believed to be the last church opened before the outbreak of the second world war. Outwardly is a relatively simple church, built in a cruciform plan in brick with Roman arched windows, tiled roof and copper spire. Set back from the pavement behind mature trees, its presence adds to the secluded, quiet appearance of The Avenue.

The Lodge, Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens. Featuring tile hanging, which is not common in the Conservation Area, the lodge acts as the formal entrance to the gardens and is typical in design of buildings of this type from the nineteenth century.

High Cedars, on Bocking End, is Modernist, flat roofed and rendered house, built with Crittall Windows and an Art Deco styling. Although examples of modernist architecture are present in Braintree, on Clockhouse Way, this is the only example within the Conservation Area. It is indicative of the influence of the Crittall family, who created Silver End, a modernist garden village close to Witham, to house workers at their factory within the village.



Figure 122 The Lodge, Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens



Figure 123 High Cedars, Bocking End



Figure 124 Our Lady, Queen of the Peace Catholic Church. Braintree Museum is visible on the left



Figure 125 Rendered dwellings, St Peter's Close



Figure 126 Tile hanging, The Avenue



Figure 127 Properties on The Avenue feature a high level of architectural decoration



Figure 128 Tree cover on The Avenue creates a sense of privacy

Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

Roofs

Roofs are typically pitched, featuring clay tiles. Street facing gables are more common in this Character area than other sections of the Conservation Area, in part due to the build date and styling of the properties. Victorian and Edwardian Arts and Crafts, aesthetically styled dwellings are prevalent. Hipped and pyramidal roofs are also a feature, leading to an eclectic, varied street scape. Buildings are predominantly detached, allowing for greater variation in roof form.

Finials, bargeboards, scalloped tiles and ornate chimneys are present throughout the Character Area. On St Peter's in the Field Road, dormers are a design feature of properties, however they are not prevalent elsewhere.

Walls

Red brick is the dominant building material, with render also present. There are examples of grey gault brick, yet overall, the material palette is in keeping with the rest of the Conservation Area.

Brick or stonework is used decoratively, to pick out architectural details and add interest to primary facades.

Tile hanging is used on buildings within the Character Area at first floor level. This adds texture and decoration yet is unusual in Essex, being a more typical feature of Sussex and the South downs. Other examples of decoration include the use of moulded bricks or brick plates.



Windows and Doors

Single glazed, timber framed, sliding sash windows are most common, with casement windows also prominent. Panes are often arranged decoratively, with top sashes featuring multiple panes and bottom sashes less plates of glass.

Where present, unsympathetic double glazing and uPVC detracts from the architectural quality of the Character Area, due to the often clunkier appearance of the glazing, with thicker glazing bars and frames than achievable in timber.

Some properties on The Avenue feature shutters, painted in complementary colours to the building, creating contrast and adding decoration. Bay windows are also common, typically featuring on first and ground floors, creating a projecting frontage which adds depth to the street scene.

Doors are predominantly timber, featuring glazed panels in the top third of the door. Coloured glazing features on some front doors. Canopies and projecting porch extensions are not common.

The use of brick detailing, including key stones around doorframes is common and doors are typically recessed, with tiled floors and/or stone steps up to front doors present on many dwellings.

Boundary Treatments

Brick boundary treatments are prevalent, with tree cover and planting creating a verdant atmosphere within the wider Character Area, echoing the appearance of Weaver's Park and Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens.

Railings, picket and close boarded fences and areas of hedging are also present.

On Bocking End, a flint wall covers much of the southern section of the Road. This adds a historic as rural quality to the road, particularly as stonework is not common within the Character area.

Public Realm

The parks are the largest part of the Character Area, meaning it is dominated by the public realm.

Other aspects of the public realm are confined to areas of pavement and the road network, where street furniture and signage are generic and add little to the quality of the area.

Views

Views across the parks are important within the Character Area, offering a sense of space and contrast to the density of built form within other sections of the Conservation Area. From the western section of Bocking End it is possible to gain views across to Bradford Street as the land falls away toward the river Blackwater, offering an appreciation of the Character Area’s setting.

Glimpsed views of houses and the roofscape beyond the parks also allow for an understanding of the Conservation Area’s setting, whilst views along the Avenue and Courtauld Road, both dominated by tree cover in summer months, create a feeling of seclusion and separation.

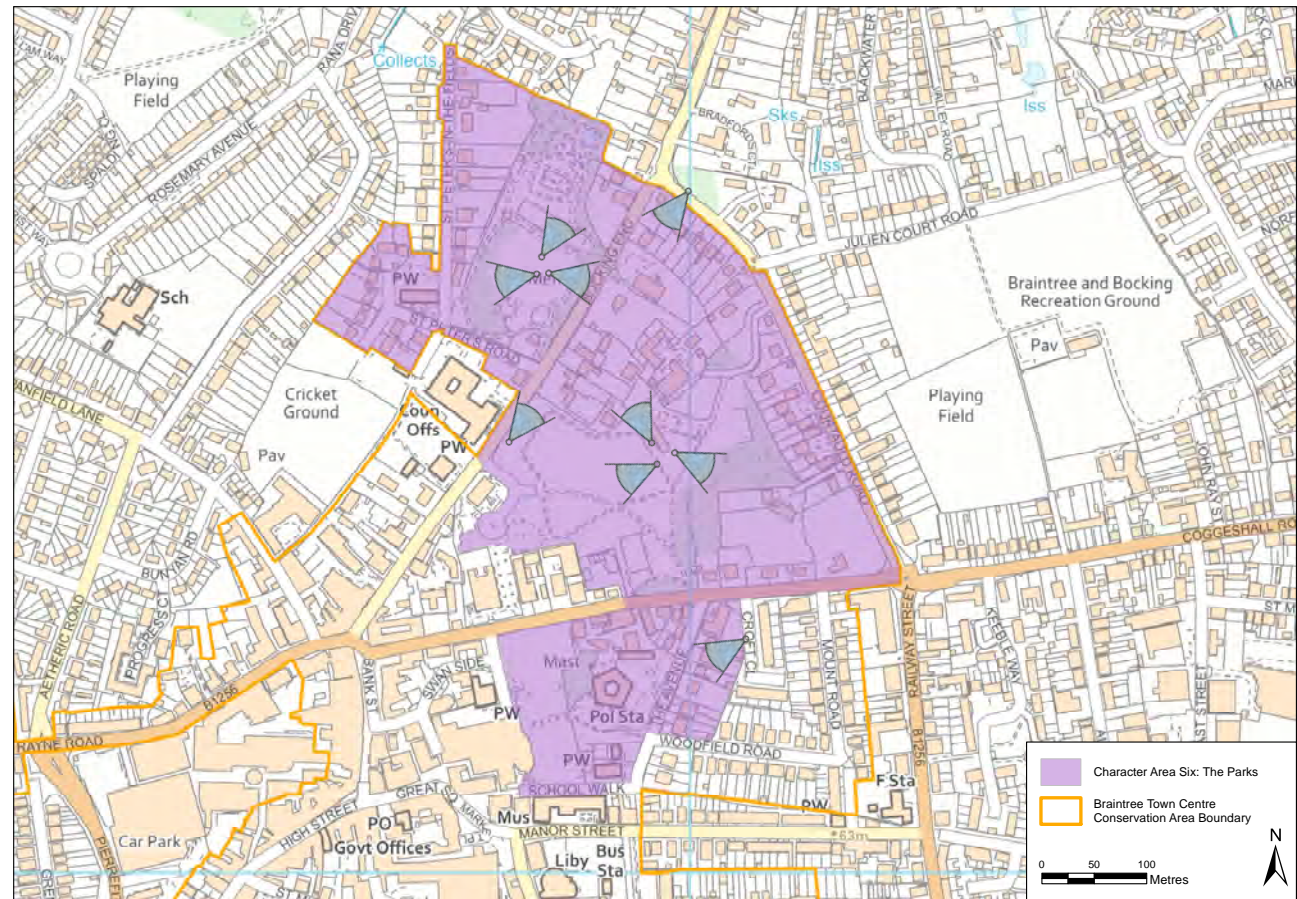


Figure 129 Map of important views in the Character Area



3.3 Setting of the Conservation Area

The setting of the Conservation Area is a contributor to its significance, allowing for the Conservation Area to be understood and appreciated. Setting is defined within the NPPF as:

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

Historically, the setting of the town centre was agrarian, with fields surrounding what is now the retail core of Braintree. Development within the nineteenth century altered the town's appearance dramatically, and sections of good quality development from this period are included within the Conservation Area's boundary. Braintree continued to expand in the latter part of the twentieth century, meaning the Conservation Area is almost entirely bound by areas of housing. To the south of the Conservation Area, near to the train station, there are areas of industrial units, leading to Braintree Village, a modern retail and leisure centre.

Further development of Braintree, either in immediate proximity to the Conservation Area, or some distance away, must be mindful of the Conservation Area's setting. Development which will alter entrances into the Conservation Area, for example would change how it is understood and appreciated, whilst the construction of tall buildings could be visible from within the Conservation Area, detracting from its appearance and overall aesthetic value.

Change will occur, and it is acknowledged that the setting of the Conservation Area

has already been compromised in some areas, comparative to its appearance in other historical periods.

However, through good planning and the appropriate implementation of planning policies, there is the opportunity to both enhance and preserve the setting of the Conservation Area. Any development which will result in harm would have to be outweighed in the planning balance and mitigation measures should be implemented where appropriate to lower and proposed harm to the setting of the Braintree Town centre Conservation Area.



4. Opportunities for Enhancement

The following key issues have been identified and are summarised below in brief. The list is in no way exhaustive and neither are the issues identified unique to Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area, with many being shared with other conservation areas.

4.1 Access and Integration

Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area is expansive and accessed through multiple routes, on foot or by vehicle. In many places entry to the Conservation Area is not discernible and better acknowledgment of the Conservation Area, either through signage, changes in streetscape features or markers would be beneficial. Interpretation boards and the creation of integrated approach, utilising uniform signage and specific lighting and paving throughout the Conservation Area, or Character Areas, would allow for improved public awareness.

4.2 Car Parking

Car parking can have an adverse effect on the character of a conservation area, impacting the street scene and how the area is experienced. Braintree Town Centre contains some areas where parking is particularly an issue and presents an opportunity for enhancement, to rid congestion and improve the appearance of the area. Particularly in residential areas, there is a shortage of off-road parking and parking is predominantly on-street, and thus does little for the appearance of the Conservation Area. Car parking within Rayne Road and Victoria Street, Mount Road and Woodfield Road Character Areas is particularly problematic, and in instances this creates a narrowing of the road, limiting visibility. Cars travel rapidly along straight sections of Rayne and Victoria Road and there is scope for subtle and sympathetic

traffic calming measures to be introduced, to ensure the safety of pedestrians and better appreciation of the character of the area.

4.3 Inappropriate Modern Development

Throughout the Conservation Area are examples of inappropriate and unsympathetic additions which can make a cumulative negative impact on the area. The addition of uncharacteristic modern porches to residential units, the replacement of windows and doors, as well as the installation of unsympathetic additions to buildings such as air conditioning units, rooflights, extraction flues, and TV aerials and satellite dishes, harm the historic character and qualities of the area. In some cases, unsympathetic fixings can affect the historic façade of buildings.

Care should be taken to ensure that unsympathetic additions do not have an impact on views along historic streets and the character of groups of historic buildings is preserved.

Within residential areas in particular, the agglomeration of structures through additional side developments between detached properties can have a detrimental impact to the historic grain of the village, and our appreciation of its development. Braintree is a historic settlement and has been subject to a considerable degree of infilling and building on larger gardens and backland sites. It is considered that further development in this way would most likely harm the character of the Conservation Area. The more substantial domestic properties within outer character areas are enhanced by the setting provided by their reasonable and proportioned gardens.

Backlands are important features of old town centres and villages, being part of the grain of the historic town plan and representing areas that had a service function in



relation to the main street frontages. Those that survive in Braintree Town Centre provide spaces useful for service areas and off-street parking. Similarly, the installation of unsympathetic and piecemeal boundary treatments can harm the immediate setting of historic buildings and spaces and the use of inappropriate railings, walls, and fences cause cumulative harm to the street scape and character of the area.

Within commercial properties, the removal and replacement of plastic and vinyl signage is considered to be an opportunity for enhancement. The use of overly large signage, and particularly of plastic and vinyl signage, can create a visually cluttered street and detract from the historic character of an area and should be avoided.

The introduction of an inappropriate colour palette and low-quality modern materials (cementitious render and roof tiles, or uPVC windows, for example) is also a concern within the Conservation Area, particularly in residential areas which are vulnerable to a diminishment of quality through the replacement of windows, doors and roof cladding. By using a palette or modern material which is out of keeping with the area, buildings can be visually domineering within a streetscape, and therefore have an impact the character of the area and group value of a street scene

4.4 Maintenance

Maintenance, and the lack of it, is notable in some sections of the Conservation Area. This is most common on private dwellings, and there is scope for better engagement with landowners to improve the appearance of properties. Regular maintenance, including painting, cleaning and the clearance of vegetation should be promoted as a key component of preserving the quality of the Conservation Area.

4.5 Neutral Contributors

A significant proportion of buildings make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

4.6 Public Realm

Street Furniture (Lampposts, benches, signage, bins, bike stands, bollards etc.)

Street furniture throughout the Conservation Area is generally of an acceptable quality, although generic in appearance. Streetlights are particularly inconsistent and modern in design and would be enhanced through replacement with traditional and consistent streetlights which respect the historic character of the area. It is considered that there is an opportunity for enhancing street furniture throughout the Conservation Area, through a heritage and design led programme of renewal.

Hard Landscaping

While road surfacing is generally of a good quality, there are some areas that would benefit from consistent maintenance. Pavements are of varying quality throughout the Conservation Area and at the time of writing the Commercial Core was undergoing a period of surface relaying.

Hard landscaping can have a particularly harmful impact on the character of the area where areas of private front gardens have been paved over in a piecemeal approach and are inconsistent with their neighbours and adjoining paving.



Open Spaces

The open and green spaces in the Conservation Area make a positive contribution and are integral to its character in many instances, particularly with The Parks Character Area. The long-term maintenance needs of these spaces should be considered and, where appropriate, opportunities taken to enhance them and ensure access is maintained through roadside pathways and public rights of way. Incidental, smaller areas of paved open space, particularly on Bank Street and the Market Place, offer breathing space and sections of respite.

Maintenance of street furniture and increasing positive public engagement with these spaces, through the expansion of outdoor cafes and restaurants for example, should be considered.

Trees and Planting

Appropriate levels of maintenance need to be ensured and, where required, opportunities for enhancement sought to maintain and manage the trees within the Conservation Area. There are opportunities to enhance the verdant appearance of the Conservation Area within residential areas, where the removal of front gardens and hedgerow has had an urbansing visual effect.

4.7 Shop Frontages

Shop frontages are of a varied quality, ranging from positive to low quality and requiring attention. Where present, original frontages are incredibly important to the street scape and should be preserved. Many shop fronts, nonetheless, are low in quality, featuring unsympathetic materials, low quality signage and, in some cases, require better upkeep and maintenance.

4.8 Vacant Buildings

The decline in the high street has meant that there are several empty shop fronts and buildings within the Conservation area. In particular, this is noticeable within the Commercial Core Character Area. Empty buildings are prone to encouraging antisocial behaviours and detract from the quality of the Conservation Area as they often fall into rapid decline, due to associated issues of neglect and a lack of maintenance. Examples of empty buildings which detract from the quality of the Conservation Area are on Rayne Road, at the site of the former car dealership.

Empty shops on the High Street also detract from the Conservation Area, offering no engagement with the public and, if high in number, discourage footfall. Other examples of vacant buildings are scattered through the Conservation Area, however there are few examples of empty residential buildings in need of urgent care.



5. Management Proposals

There are a wide range of issues facing the Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This section seeks to recommend management proposals which address these issues in both the short and long term.

5.1 Positive Management: Short term

The first set of proposals relate to positive management and focus on good practice and improved ways of working with the local planning authority. These are generally low cost and can be implemented within a short timeframe, typically within one or two years.

Enforcement

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

General Maintenance: Public Realm and Highways

Through the agreement of a standard good practice within the Conservation Area between relevant Local Authority teams and other landowners, long term goals can be set to promote good design within the public realm, such as avoiding excessive road markings or signage and agreeing a standard street furniture within Character Areas to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced.

Heritage Statements, Heritage Impact Assessments and Archaeological Assessments

In accordance with the NPPF (Para.189), applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

All applications within the Conservation Area and immediate setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement. Any application without a Heritage Statement should not be validated.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, tree's or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the conservation area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2019). Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated.

Local Heritage List

A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. Local Lists can be beneficial in ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of historic buildings that contribute to the character of the settlements. The exercise of creating a Local List would also facilitate a greater understanding of the area and could be utilised as a public engagement strategy to improve awareness



and understanding.

Neutral Elements

The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

Braintree District Council must not allow for the quality of design to be 'averaged down' by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment. Officers must where possible seek schemes which enhance the built environment and look to conserve and reinstate historic features. It is also considered that poor-quality or unsympathetic schemes should not be allowed, both within the Conservation Area and its setting.

New Development

There are numerous opportunities within Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area and its setting for development which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

To be successful, any future development needs to be mindful of the local character of the Conservation Area, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability.

Successful new development will:

- Respect important views;
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings;
- Use materials and building methods which as high in quality of those used in

existing buildings; and

- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.

Braintree District Council should guide development in a positive manner by:

- Engaging with developers at an early stage through the Pre-Application Process to ensure modern development is high quality in design, detail and materials.
- Considering the referral of medium-large scale development schemes to a Design Review (or similar) so that new buildings, additions and alterations can be designed in sympathy with the established character of the area. The choice of materials and the detailed design of building features are important in making sure it's appropriate to the Conservation Area.
- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

Public resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area.

In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their



property in an appropriate manner. A single Good Practice Design Guide on standard alterations such as signage, shopfronts, windows, doors, rainwater goods, boundaries and roof extensions, will ensure inappropriate development does not continue to be the accepted norm. A Design Guide should:

- Provide guidance on appropriate design and materials for windows and doors and encouraging the retention or reinstatement of historic glazing patterns and door designs and the use of appropriate materials.
- Provide guidance on the traditional form of boundary treatments and encourage their reinstatement where they have been removed or compromised.
- Provide guidance on traditional roofing materials and encouraging the reinstatement of good quality slate and handmade clay tiles with the removal of unsympathetic modern materials such as interlocking concrete tiles.
- Provide and update guidance relating to signage. This should address appropriate size and design, the extent and amount and associated lighting. All further planning applications and advert consent applications should be required to comply, where possible, with this standard, designed to help to restore the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Twentieth Century Premises

There are some twentieth century developments which make a neutral or negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area. There is scope to enhance these sites and buildings through a considered design approach which can guide future improvements. Should opportunities for redevelopment arise in the future, high quality design should be pursued and encouraged through design guidance.

A survey of buildings within the Conservation Area, identifying areas and sites suitable for redevelopment, could be beneficial to pursue positive change. As part of the local authority's local plan, areas of development should be identified and it is therefore integral that a joined-up approach is adopted by Braintree District Council when creating new policies, acknowledging heritage constraints whilst encouraging positive growth.

5.2 Positive Management: Longer Term

The second set of proposals are also focussed on positive management but either take longer to implement or are better suited to a longer time frame.

Access and Integration

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

Car Parking

This should begin with a car parking survey to establish the need for car parking. Once the level of necessary car parking has been established a landscape strategy should be created by Braintree District Council in conjunction with local stakeholders.

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be reviewed from time to time to monitor change and inform management proposals.



Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary has been revised within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2019) and Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2018). The boundary now excludes areas which were deemed to not reflect the historic and architectural qualities for which the Conservation Area was designated and includes sections of housing from the later nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century which are indicative of the period in which they were built, offering an understanding of the town's development in its more recent history.

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

Interpretation: Improved Understanding and Awareness

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

The creation of a heritage trail, unification of signage across the Conservation Area and introduction of additional interpretation boards would be beneficial.

Opportunity Sites

There are some opportunity sites across the Conservation Area which, if sensitively redeveloped, may enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Sites which may provide opportunity for enhancement include those where premises

or buildings are empty, back land areas to the rear of commercial structures, corner plots and car parks.

Public Realm

The first opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area is through investment to improve the wider public realm. This can be achieved through continuing to improve and rationalise existing street furniture.

Better maintenance of areas of public space, through weeding, planting, the renewal of benches and the maintenance of existing features through the creation of an integrated management plan, combined with developer, landowners and the local authority would be of benefit. Encouragement of areas of outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes, as well as the continued presence of markets stalls will also encourage renewed public engagement with the commercial areas of the town centre.

Shop Frontages

There is scope for improvement to shop frontages to enhance the character and appearance of the historic streetscape. In addition to tightening controls, small grant funding schemes would provide an incentive to encourage private property owners to carry out works to enhance their property and thereby the wider conservation area. Vacant shop units can be enhanced creatively at a low cost and should be considered a 'blank canvas' for improvement. This could include public art or information on the area. The Council should consider utilising existing powers to intervene where any unit has been vacant for over three months so that it does not detract from the area's character and appearance.



Vacant Dwellings and Neglected Upper Floors

Small grant funding schemes would provide an incentive to encourage private property owners to carry out works to enhance their property and thereby the wider Conservation Area. In particular, the conversion and reuse of vacant upper floors in commercial buildings should be received favourably through appropriate policy, encouraging a nighttime economy and natural surveillance of the commercial areas, created by the presence of residential units.

5.3 Funding Opportunities

There are three main funding opportunities which would assist in the execution of these plans:

National Heritage Lottery Fund

The National Heritage Lottery Fund is the single largest dedicated funder of heritage in the UK and therefore is the most obvious potential source of funding. Funding is often targeted at schemes which preserve, enhance and better reveal the special interest of the area whilst also improving public awareness and understanding. Grant opportunities and requirements change overtime, for up-to-date information on NHLF schemes Braintree District Council should consult their appointed Heritage Specialist.

Section 106 Agreements

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon the Conservation Area. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site specific improvements.

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is a programme run by Historic England to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. As the name suggests, the scheme forms partnerships with local authorities (along with any additional funding partners) to facilitate the regeneration of an area through the conservation of its built heritage. The scheme makes funds available to individuals to enable them to carry out repairs or improvement works to their property to enhance the area. This would be suitable to preserve and enhance either the shop frontages or the architectural detailing also improving public awareness and understanding. Grant opportunities and requirements change overtime, for up-to-date information on NHLF schemes Braintree District Council should consult their appointed Heritage Specialist.



6. Appendices

6.1 Bibliography

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6.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/ GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (2021) DCLG	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2014) DCLG	ID: 18a
National Guidance	English Heritage (2019) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance	
Local Supplementary Planning Document	Braintree District Council Local Plan; Policy LPP 47 Built and Historic Environment	

6.3 List of All Designated Heritage Assets within the Conservation Area

List Entry No.	Name	Grade
1122509	19 and 21, London Road	II
1122510	23-33, London Road	II
1122534	Barclay's Bank, Bank Street	II
1122535	3 and 9, Bank Street	II
1122540	2, Bocking End	II
1122541	Congregational Church, Bocking End	II
1171095	98 and 100, Coggeshall Road	II
1171161	2, Great Square (listed as House and Shop Occupied by Adams and Sons Newsagent)	II
1171229	The Boar's Head Hotel, 85 to 93 (odd), High Street	II
1171905	34, New Street	II
1235013	3, New Street (listed as The Liberal Club, currently Braintree Post Office)	II
1235026	Town Hall, including Screens and Public Lavatories adjoining North East and South	II*
1305300	48-52, Rayne Road	II
1305310	4 and 6, South Street	II

List Entry No.	Name	Grade
1305314	66, South Street	II
1305319	5 and 7, Panfield Lane	II
1305336	28-34, Rayne Road	II
1305441	112, High Street	II
1305456	Blandford House, 7, London Road	II
1305659	113 and 115, High Street	II
1305791	84, Coggeshall Road	II
1338240	11, Bank Street	II
1338243	The White Hart Hotel, Bocking End	II
1338244	The Institute and Museum, 15, Bocking End	II
1338261	21, Coggeshall Road	II
1338262	86, Coggeshall Road	II
1338263	The Constitutional Club and Shops, Great Square	II*
1338264	Bell Inn, Great Square	II
1338287	77-81, London Road	II
1338291	Angel Inn, 33, Notley Road	II
1338292	3, Panfield Lane	II*

List Entry No.	Name	Grade
1338293	Church of St Michael, St Michael's Road	II
1391259	Fountain, corner of St Michaels Road and High Street	II
1391584	Church of St Peter, St Peter's Road	II
1393723	John Ray House, Bocking End (also known as Braintree County High School Gymnasium)	II
1393767	Almshouses, 2, St Michael's Road	II
1393768	Leahurst, High Street	II
1409745	The Corner House, Market Place	II
1122473	22, New Street	II
1122474	24 and 26, New Street	II
1338241	33, Bank Street	II
1122537	37 and 39, Bank Street	II
1122538	40, Bank Street	II
1338266	The Old Manor House, Little Square	II*
1122536	31, Bank Street	II
1338242	Swan Inn, 22-26, Bank Street	II*
1338294	68 and 70, South Street	II
1338290	2, New Street (listed as House Occupied By Henry Joscelyn Limited)	II

List Entry No.	Name	Grade
1338289	3, New Street	II
1171889	4, New Street	II
1338314	The Cage or Lock Up, New Street	II
1122470	The Bull Hotel, Market Square	II
1122504	The Horn Hotel, High Street	II
1122471	Number 23 and Hill House, Market Place	II
1140085	Baytrees Restaurant and Osborn's Shop, Little Square/Drury Lane	II
1122505	74, 74a and Corn Exchange, High Street	II
1171330	76 and 78, High Street	II
1122507	90, High Street	II
1338265	100 And 102, High Street	II
1171730	92-96, High Street	II
1171209	73 and 75, High Street	II
1305673	72a and 72, High Street	II
1122506	80, High Street	II

6.4 Glossary (NPPF)

Term	Description
Archaeological interest	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
Conservation (for heritage policy)	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
Designated heritage asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic environment record	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
Setting of a heritage asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.



6.5 Frequently Asked Questions

What is a conservation area?

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

The National Planning Policy Framework regards conservation areas as 'designated heritage assets'.

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

How are conservation areas designated and managed?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Boundary maps of conservation areas can be found on your Local Planning Authority website. Some authorities have an online interactive map search allowing you to search for a property. You can also contact your local planning authority directly to find out if you reside within a conservation area. Braintree District Council has an interactive Conservation Areas map which can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/planning-building-control/conservation-areas>.

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

Many conservation areas have an Article 4 Direction which covers the painting, rendering or cladding of external walls. Alterations or extensions to buildings in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. Your Local Authority will provide advice as



to how to proceed.

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

If routine works of maintenance are to be carried out using authentic materials and traditional craft techniques, on a like-for-like basis, you are not likely to need to apply for permission. The use of a contractor with the necessary skills and experience of working on historic buildings is essential. Inappropriate maintenance works and the use of the wrong materials will cause damage to the fabric of a historic building. It is recommended you contact the local planning authority for clarification before commencing any works.

Will I need to apply for permission for a new or replacement garage, fence, boundary wall or garden structure?

Any demolition, development or construction in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. A replacement boundary, garage, cartlodge or greenhouse will need to be designed with the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area in mind. Your Local Authority will provide advice as to how to proceed with an application.

Can I demolish a building in a conservation area?

Demolition or substantial demolition of a building within a conservation area will usually require permission from the local planning authority.

What is an Article 4 Direction?

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, certain minor works, such as domestic alterations, can normally be carried out without planning permission. However, some conservation areas are covered by an Article 4 Direction, which brings certain types of development back under the control of a local planning authority. This allows potentially harmful proposals to be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications. Article 4 Directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area and a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Historic England provides information on Article 4 Directions on their website.

Can I remove a tree within a conservation area?

If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work, the local planning authority must be notified 6 weeks before any work begins. This enables the authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and, if

necessary, create a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it. Consent will be required for any works to trees that are protected. Further information on TPOs can be found on Historic England's website.

How do I find out more about a conservation area?

Historic England's website has information on conservation areas and their designation. Further information on the value of conservation areas and what it means to live in a conservation area can also be accessed via their website.

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

In addition, local planning authorities have information on the conservation areas within their boundaries available on their websites. They will have information pertaining to when the conservation area was designated, how far it extends and the reason for its designation.

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