

Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Client:
Tendring District Council

Date:
November 2023





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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary

This Appraisal and Management Plan will provide an overview of the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area, outlining its designation history, alterations to the boundary, and describe its special interest. The appraisal will also consider buildings, parks, spaces, and features which contribute to its character and appearance.

Conservation Area designation provides broader protection than the listing of individual buildings as it recognises all features within the area which form part of its character and ensures that planning decisions take the enhancement and preservation of the quality of the area into consideration.

Dovercourt's significance is predominantly derived from its historic value most closely associated with the early development of Harwich as a seaside resort, centred on a core of historic terraced streets, and the open space of the park and Beacon Hill Fort which are historic in their origins and enhance our understanding of the development of the Conservation Area. Its significance also derives from the architectural interest of the nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings which make up the core of the Conservation Area. The historic and architectural significance of the Conservation Area has been damaged by the loss of key buildings of historic and architectural significance, and the current condition of other important buildings.

1.2 Conserving Tendring's Heritage

Place Services prepared this Conservation Area Appraisal for Tendring District Council. The document is provided as baseline information for applicants to consider, when designing or planning new development in Dovercourt.

This report provides an assessment of the historic development and character of Dovercourt and 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 and appearance of the area.

This assessment will consider how different Character Areas within Dovercourt came to be developed, their 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 impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character of Dovercourt. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and analysis of the individual character areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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 should be used as a baseline to inform future development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the historic environment and its unique character.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance, some of which is outlined in the bibliography.

Applications that demonstrate a genuine understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce good design and good outcomes for agents and their clients. This Appraisal will strengthen the understanding of Dovercourt and its development, informing future change.

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 chapter 16 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

The Dovercourt Conservation Area is located within Tendring District. is located within Tendring District. Local planning policy is set out in the Tendring District Local Plan 2013 - 2033 and Beyond (2022). Policies which are relevant to heritage assets include:

Policy SPL 3 - Sustainable Design

Policy PP 8 - Tourism

Policy PPL 3 - The Rural Landscape

Policy PPL 7 - Archaeology

Policy PPL 8 - Conservation Areas

Policy PPL 9 - Listed Buildings

Policy PPL 10 - Renewable energy generation and energy efficiency

The Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area was designated in 1986, and extended in 1992 to the west and in 1995 to the east. The boundary has been reviewed in 2021 as part of the production of this appraisal, with extensions made to Kingsway, and further changes made following public consultation in 2022 to include the south west section of Kingsway and Cliff Gardens, and to exclude modern development to the east of the Station.

1.5 Public Consultation

Tendring District Council held a six week public consultation on the draft Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan running from Monday 4th July to Monday 15th August 2022. An exhibition event was also held in the Dovercourt and Harwich Hub, 276 High Street, on the 12th July from 3-7pm. Comments received during this period have been reviewed and incorporated into the final draft of this document, including boundary changes outlined in Section 1.4 above.

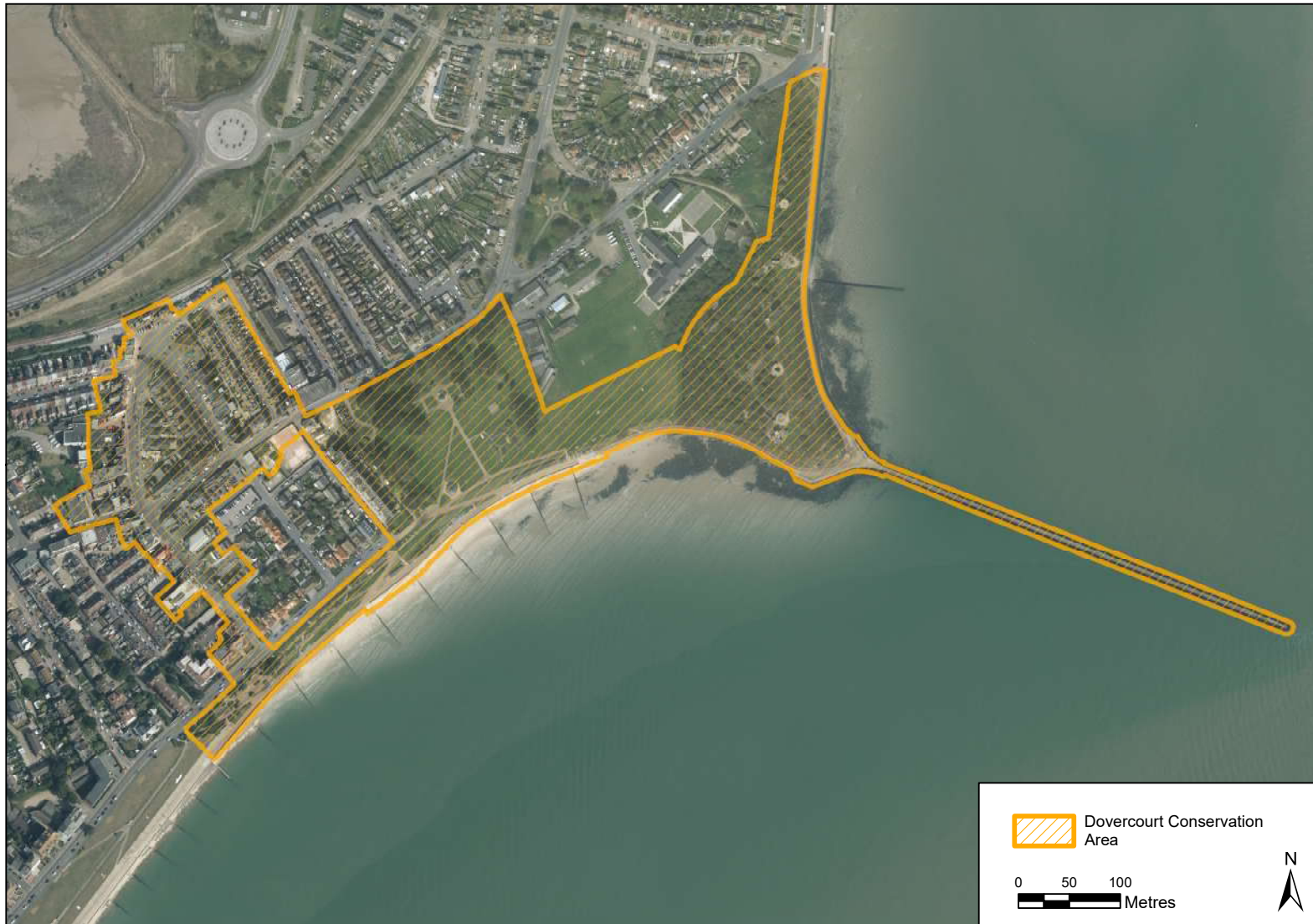


Figure 1 Map showing Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area Boundary



2. Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area

2.1 Context and General Character

Dovercourt is located in the north east of Tendring District and Essex County, on the peninsular which also contains Harwich. Dovercourt is a historic settlement which appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 and is rich in maritime history, linked historically and economically to its neighbouring settlement, Harwich. It is bounded to the north by a railway line and the south by the coast.

The Dovercourt Conservation Area covers the area known as 'Lower Dovercourt', to the south east of Dovercourt Station. This area was originally developed by John Bagshaw, an entrepreneur and MP for Harwich, who planned the seaside resort of 'New Dovercourt' surrounding his villa (demolished in 1911 and formerly set within Cliff Park). While only Orwell Terrace was built from Bagshaw's masterplan, the remainder of the settlement grew to the west and a defining feature of the Conservation Area is the consistent survival of this mid nineteenth and early twentieth century development.

To the east of the Conservation Area is Beacon Hill, a Scheduled Monument comprising predominantly twentieth century defence structures of considerable archaeological and landscape value. It is situated on a vantage point over the coastline and has been recognised as an important defensive site for centuries, with archaeological finds suggesting the site was occupied as early as the Bronze Age.

2.2 Origin and Evolution

The following section provides an overview of the history of Dovercourt and the surrounding settlement.

Prehistory

Evidence of human occupation is found in Dovercourt from early prehistory. Historic gravel extraction in Upper Dovercourt has yielded a large collection of Palaeolithic flint tools and faunal remains of elephant, rhinoceros and deer. The remains were recovered from sediments on the higher ground to the west along Main Road, a small outcrop of these gravels lie within the Conservation Area. The area's location on the coastline, with resources, including a freshwater spring would have provided an ideal place for occupation for early settlers. Neolithic pottery has been recovered from Dovercourt Bay just beyond the Conservation Area's extent.

Late Iron Age and Roman

Historic sources suggest there is some evidence for permanent settlement during the Roman period, possibly within the Conservation Area near Cliff Park where remains of a tessellated pavement and earthworks were recorded. Septaria stone was used by the Romans for construction and was extracted from the Dovercourt area to be used at strongholds, like the town walls at Colchester.

Medieval

In the early medieval period, the area appears to be largely open and undeveloped. The Conservation Area lay either side of the main road between the historic medieval port and town at Harwich and the small settlement, known as Dovercourt, to the west. Saxon burials close to All Saints churchyard suggest there may have been an earlier precursor to the Norman church at Upper Dovercourt. The earliest known evidence of substantial activity within the Conservation Area dates to the late medieval period when Beacon Hill was used for military activity as a defensive point. This is evident on a map from 1534 showing the proposed fortifications, the building of which commenced in 1539.

Post Medieval

The 1777 Chapman and André map shows a small settlement named Dover Court centred around All Saints Church and the junctions of Fronk's Road with Manor Lane and Hall Lane but depicts little evidence of any activity within the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area. A windmill is shown standing at the place where Orwell Road and Marine Parade meet today, located outside of the Conservation Area.

There was a necessity in the early nineteenth century to fortify Harwich due to its strategic position at the Orwell and Stour estuaries. The Beacon Hill continued as a promontory fort into the Napoleonic period (1799-1815) with barrack blocks and a small gun battery known to have existed in 1811; a military barracks, arsenals and a hospital followed on the site by the mid nineteenth century. These were accompanied by a large practice ground. Some of the barracks were located within the Conservation Area. The fort was replaced by the existing battery in 1860. In 1863 the Harwich lighthouses

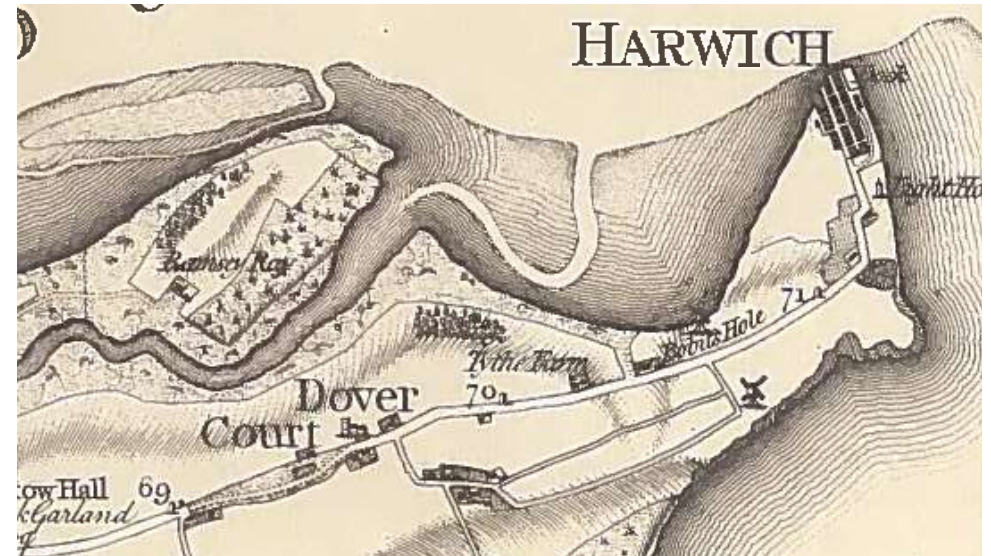


Figure 2 Chapman and Andre Map of 1777

were superseded by the Dovercourt Lights. Buildings and features associated with the expansion of the military complex during the nineteenth century have been identified during excavations adjacent to the Conservation Area at Barrack Lane.

The then called 'Lower Dovercourt' settlement, along with Harwich, grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as sea bathing became popular. Two large

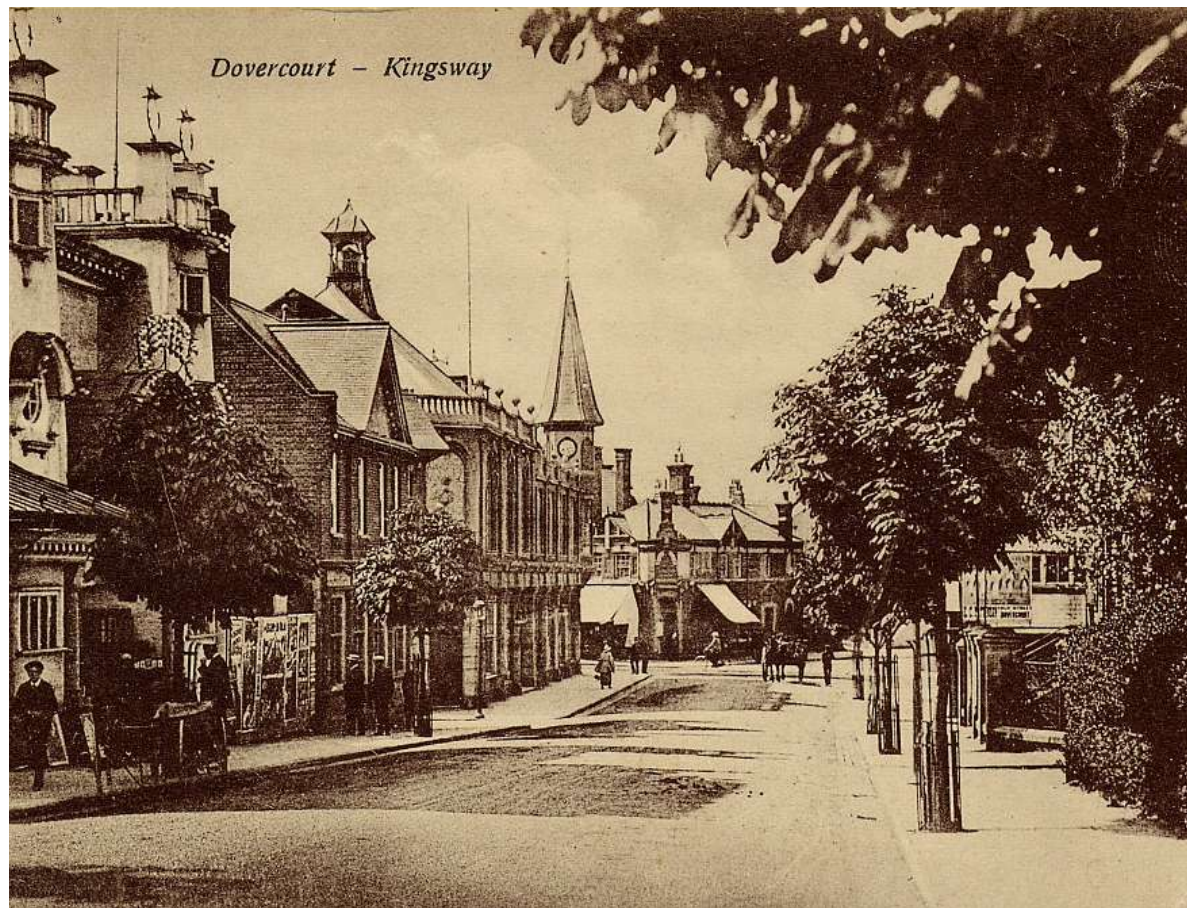


Figure 3 Postcard of view along Kingsway

country houses were established within the Conservation Area; Cliff House, the residence of John Bagshaw, was built in 1845 within the Cliff Park Gardens and Holly Lodge, and the house of politician John Attwood was located in grounds on the west side of Kingsway (Figure 3). Bagshaw, an entrepreneur and politician, acquired land in lower Dovercourt where he planned to build a new seaside resort along with the London architect W.H Lindsey. In 1854 John Bagshaw opened Cliff House as a spa and pump room and completed the development of Orwell Terrace. The extent of his masterplan can be seen in (Figure 4), however only a small portion of this was ever realised in Orwell Terrace.

Dovercourt became known as a spa resort. The opening of the Harwich branch of the Eastern Union Railway in 1854 also encouraged the expansion of the settlement.

The eastern development of Lower Dovercourt, which grew as a linear settlement along the main road to Harwich, is evident on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1876 compared to the earlier Tithe Map (Figure 5 and Figure 7). The area within the Conservation Area comprised largely of holiday residences, hotels and inns which facilitated the tourist industry. The two terraces of residential housing along Victoria Street and Orwell Road (Figure 6) are also evident and some of the surviving buildings are now listed. A small area of gravel extraction and an unknown earthwork are recorded within the north of the Conservation Area.

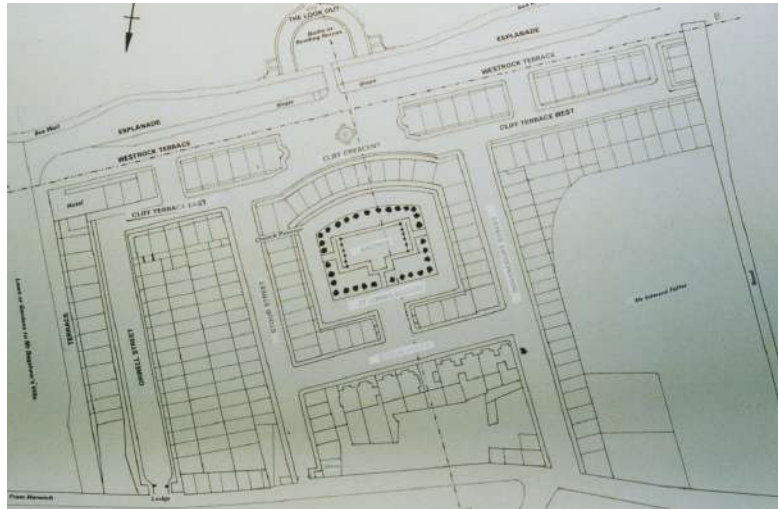


Figure 4 Masterplan for Dovercourt seaside resort



Figure 6 Orwell Terrace and Slopes, Dovercourt 1873 (ERO X172-19 Imp 120-1-3)



Figure 5 Tithe Map of Dovercourt, 1840



Figure 7 Ordnance Survey Map 1876. The Spa and spring are visible at Cliff House

Modern

Dovercourt continued to grow as a seaside resort into the twentieth century. Cliff Gardens were opened to the public in 1909 and other areas of public realm, including the promenade, were improved. Cliff Park opened in 1911 as part of the Borough's Coronation celebrations (Figure 8). The park was formed of John Bagshaw's private gardens following his bankruptcy.

The town was to play an important role as a naval base in both the First and Second World Wars. Beacon Hill Fort was remodelled during First World War; the defensive area was enlarged outside of the Conservation Area and Dovercourt was temporarily closed as a seaside resort.

Between the First and Second World War visitor numbers increased after the reopening of the resort, with most tourists travelling by rail. By the 1920s the centre of new Dovercourt was expanding along newly built streets, including Kingsway, located within the Conservation Area. Following the declaration of the Second World War in 1939, Dovercourt was closed to holiday makers and many large buildings, such as those in Cliff Road, were used to accommodate naval personnel. The Essex Regiment had the task of protecting Harwich and Dovercourt using Beacon Hill Fort; the site was re-adapted in the Second World War including the construction of a hexagonal radar tower and extensive barracks. Aerial photographs taken in 1946 and 1948 show that eight barrack accommodation huts stood around the southwest of Barrack Field with four large buildings grouped to the northwest. Four buildings survive along the boundary or within the Conservation Area including the Air Raid Wardens Post, a Barracks, the practice battery vavasseur gun emplacement and a probable former concrete defensive structure. The core area of the fort was scheduled and this scheduling was later extended along the coastal path; the vavasseur gun is also protected as a Scheduled Monument.



Figure 8 The Avenue in Cliff Park, 1911



Figure 9 Dovercourt Seaside Resort



Figure 10 Dovercourt Aerial Photograph 10th May 1946



Figure 11 Dovercourt High Street 1935



Despite damage during cliff subsidence in 1970, Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area remains largely in its original plan, legible as it was during Dovercourt's heyday as a seaside resort. However, with the decline in popularity of English seaside holidays in the later twentieth and early twenty first centuries, Dovercourt too saw a decline in its local economy. This impacted the condition of its historic buildings and areas of public realm, resulting in the loss of architectural details, traditional building materials, elements such as historic buildings and street trees, and even in some cases the loss of listed buildings. This, along with developments such as land reclamation and the building of the A120 as a new approach to Harwich, have drawn vehicular and pedestrian traffic away from Dovercourt.

2.3 Designation of the Conservation Area

The Dovercourt Conservation Area was first designated in 1986, and further extended in 1992 and 1995. Tendring District Council prepared Conservation Area Character Appraisals for each of its Conservation Areas in 2005 based on unadopted reports on each.

2.4 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 Dovercourt's unique built environment, in line with the NPPF guidance on Conservation Areas (paragraph 191). Reductions have been made where modern, neutral additional buildings have been established, and the following additions have been made:

Additions

- 246-250 and 252 High Street

This twentieth century stone building is of architectural and historic value, built in the 1930s. The former chapel next door (1874) makes a positive contribution to the historic character of the area, with the later shopfront additions and original painted signage on gable end adding interest to the street scape

- The Library and 33-45 Kingsway

The Library building is of communal, architectural, and historic value, its former use as a bus station is legible in its architectural style and tall apertures. The adjacent buildings have preserved some historic shopfront details.

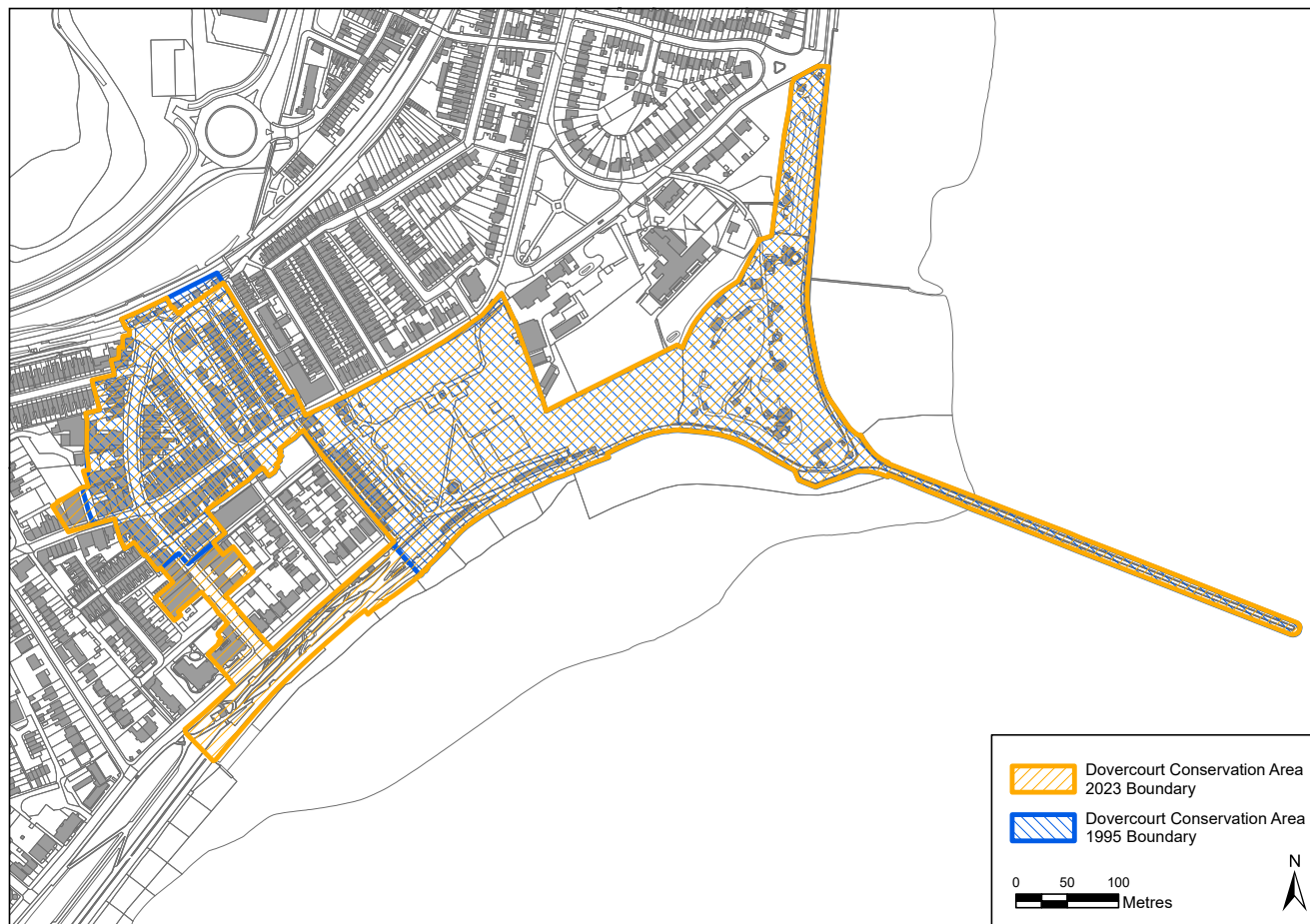


Figure 12 Map showing boundary changes

- 54 - 60 Kingsway
The Wetherspoons and mid-century shopfronts are of historic and architectural value and make a positive contribution to the streetscape, having retained many original architectural features, and therefore enhance understanding of the development of this street throughout the twentieth century.
- The Queen Victoria Statue
The Grade II Listed Statue of Queen Victoria was built in 1905. It is life size, and made of white marble.
- Former Alexandra Hotel
The sole remaining example of an Edwardian hotel building on the seafront, visited by King Edward VII when he unveiled the adjacent statue, resulting in the street name.
- Cliff Garden west extension
A historic designed seaside garden of interest, laid out by John Bagshaw as far as Mill Lane.

2.5 Designated Heritage Assets

There are five designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area boundary, comprising four grade II listed buildings and features and one scheduled monument.

Scheduled Monument

- Beacon Hill Fort: A late nineteenth and twentieth century coastal artillery fortification (List Entry ID: 1018958).

Grade II listed buildings and features

- The Convent (1-13, Orwell Road) (List Entry ID: 1298462);
- Market Hall and Railings on South East and South West Sides (List Entry ID: 1187913);
- Garden House (List Entry ID: 1281237);
- 101 And 103, Main Road (List Entry ID: 1187917); and
- Statue of Queen Victoria, Kingsway (List Entry ID: 1187927).

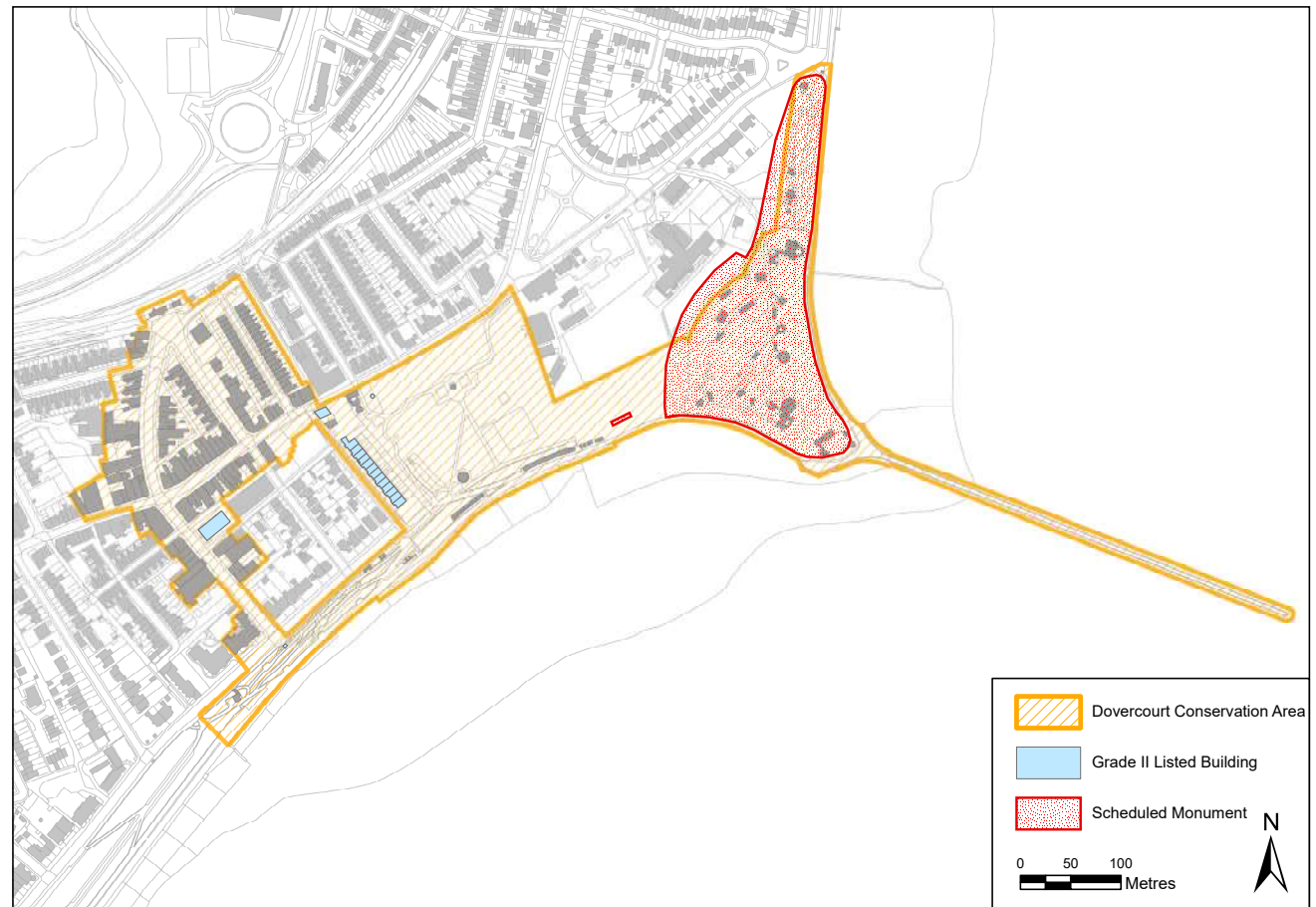


Figure 13 Map showing designated heritage assets



2.6 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

There is currently no list of buildings and features of local historical and/or architectural interest in Tendring District. Buildings within the Conservation Area which should be considered for inclusion are identified below and are buildings and features of townscape merit. These have been identified as they are either considered to be good examples of their type or architectural style, are prominent local landmarks, demonstrate use of local materials or design features, or are connected to local historical events, activities or people, and are all relatively complete in their survival. Further information on their contribution to the Conservation Area can be found in Section 3.6 and 3.7.

- 230 High Street (TSB Bank)
- 153 – 155 High Street
- 42 – 46 Kingsway
- Dovercourt Station
- Cliff Park

2.7 Heritage at Risk

The Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area has been included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register as being in 'very bad' condition and has been identified as 'deteriorating significantly'.¹ A study which assessed four coastal Vulnerable Conservation Areas (Essex County Council, 2015) identified key issues facing the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area which contribute to it being at risk. These were as follows:

1. The Condition of Station Building and its environs;
2. The Site of the Former Victoria Hotel, Kingsway;
3. Site of the former Park Hotel, Orwell Road;
4. 1 Orwell Road;
5. Underlying concerns over finance and perception of the area;
6. Use of unsuitable materials and loss of architectural features;
7. Loss of Boundary Treatments;
8. Poor quality of new signage; and
9. Inclusion of the Scheduled Monument within the Conservation Area boundary.

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/5582>



These issues are addressed in greater detail within Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Within the Conservation Area, the Scheduled Monument Beacon Hill Fort is also included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register with 'extensive, significant problems' and in need of management.²

There are a number of vacant sites and properties throughout the Conservation Area which, although not included on the Historic England Register, are also considered to be at risk of deterioration and make a negative impact on the Conservation Area.

2.8 Archaeological Potential

Although archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken around Dovercourt, little has been undertaken within the Conservation Area itself. Mesolithic tools and Neolithic settlement activity have been identified on Dovercourt beach; this indicates a potential for Prehistoric archaeology within the area. The archaeology of the Conservation Area is likely to comprise of mainly post medieval features, structures and finds. Defensive structures dating to the Napoleonic period were identified during trial trenching on Barrack Lane (Phase 2 Evaluation; Trial Trenching (Archaeological Intervention. Ref: 880). There has been some historic quarrying within the urban area which may have caused localised disturbance to any archaeological deposits.

The trial trenching at Barrack Lane has indicated there is the potential for preserved archaeological remains within the Conservation Area. This may include waterlogged deposits which can be anticipated within clayey soils and probably survive in deeper features such as wells and cess-pits. Soil-conditions are variable, the London Clay allows for the preservation of faunal remains whilst the gravels are acidic and faunal survival is poor. Artefacts such as ceramics, building materials and metal survive on both soil-types, albeit in better condition on the within clay.

2 <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/26408>

3. Assessment of Significance

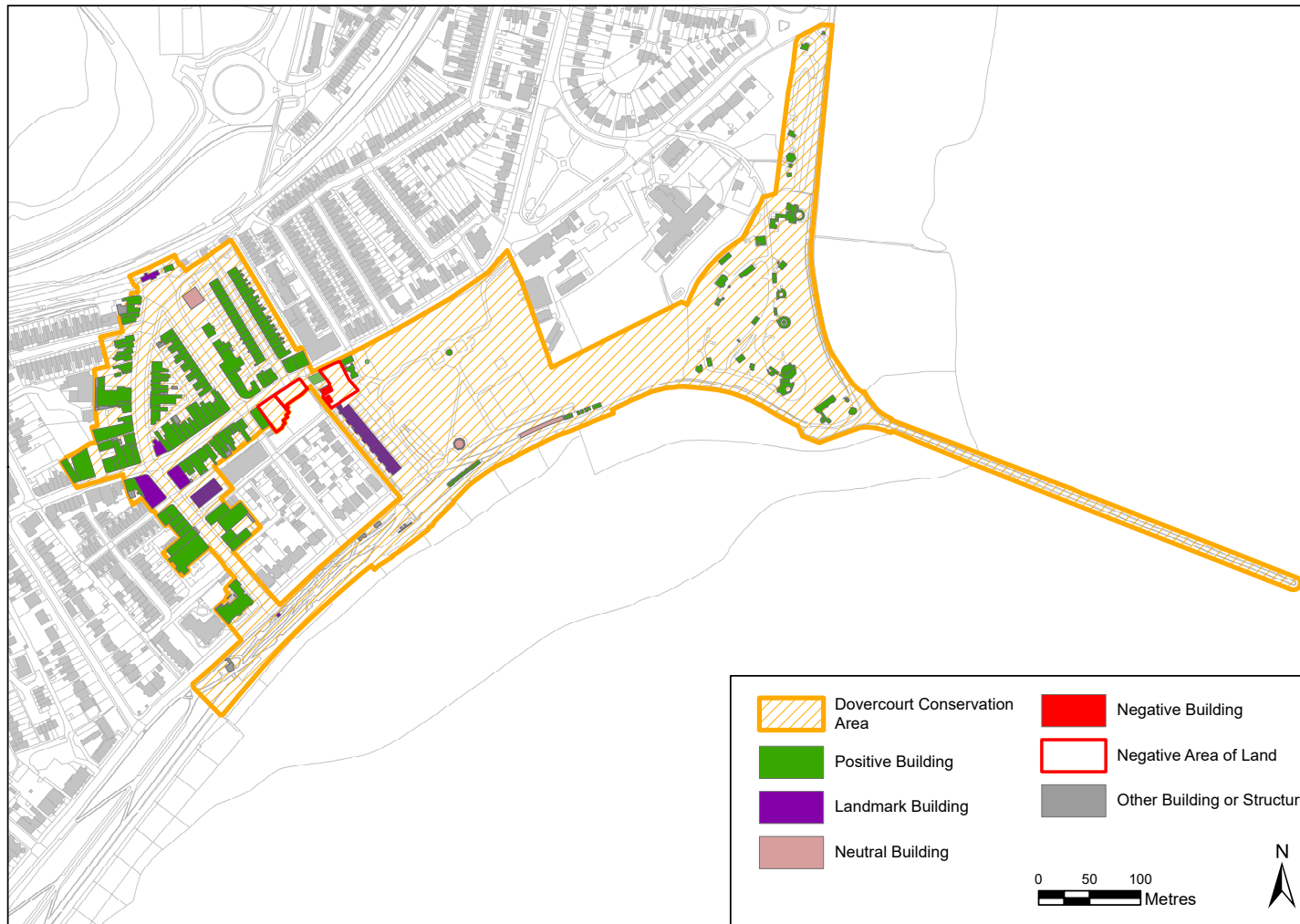


Figure 14 Map showing significance of buildings and features in the Conservation Area - note that many features are in need of urgent repairs to prevent them declining and impacting their significance. The map demonstrates the potential of buildings within the Conservation Area, rather than current condition



3.1 Summary

The significance of Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area is predominantly influenced by its coastal location, which has given rise to its historic use as a defensive site and its origins as a nineteenth century seaside resort, master planned by John Bagshaw along with architect W.H Lindsey. The Conservation Area is formed of three very distinct parts, which each have their own character and make a positive contribution to the overall special interest of the Conservation Area. These are the recreational and residential seaside development of Orwell Road and Cliff Park, the commercial core and gateway comprising the High Street, Station and connecting roads, and the defensive Beacon Hill Fort to the south east.

Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area is notable as the majority of buildings within it are historic in origin, and there has been very little modern development within the Conservation Area boundary. This contributes to the significance of the area, as its historic character has been retained, with many original features surviving. This significance has, however, been impacted by gradual decline of the condition of the building stock, and incremental changes such as inappropriate fascia, window, door and boundary replacement. Figure 14 highlights the significant buildings, spaces and features within the Conservation Area.

3.2 Land Usage

The land within the Conservation Area is comprised of commercial, residential, recreational and heritage sites. Commercial buildings are predominantly clustered along the High Street and Kingsway, with shopfronts, cafes, public houses and restaurants at ground floor level and residential above. Residential buildings are found in greater density to the north of the High Street and east of Kingsway, and along Orwell Terrace. These are predominantly comprised of terraced housing with small front garden plots and narrow rear garden plots. The largest area of recreational space is located within Cliff Park, which is comprised of a variety of recreational uses such as a children's playground, walks, outdoors gym, and bandstand. The defensive fort at Beacon Hill is currently in use as a heritage and educational site, with the defensive buildings and complex open to group bookings and managed by a volunteer group.

3.3 Views

Key views are identified on Figure 15. The views included in this assessment are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there may be other views of significance. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should consider the views below and any others which may be relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.

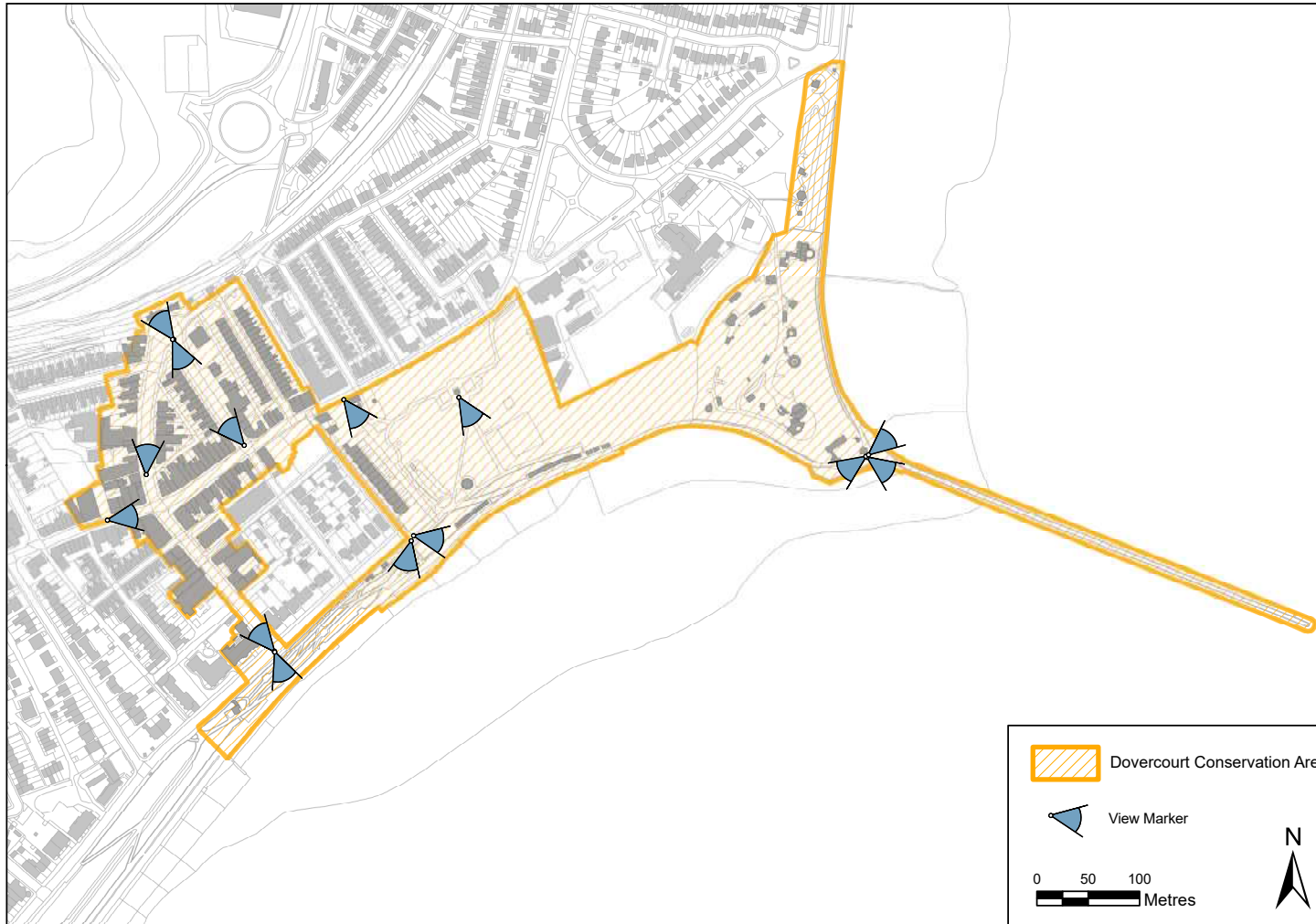


Figure 15 Map showing key views within the Conservation Area

Views from and towards the Station

These views towards the Station building are significant in demonstrating its prominent position in terminating views, and the street plan which is comprised of wide roads which lead towards the Station.

Views from and towards Beacon Hill Fort

These views are key in demonstrating why the fort was positioned here on the peninsular, with commanding views over the Harbour and sea.

Views Along the High Street, Kingsway and Orwell Road

These views encompass the built heritage of Dovercourt, demonstrating the high density of twentieth century development as well as designated and positive buildings.

Views from Cliff Park

These views allow for appreciation of the Conservation Area and its setting, and provide key points from which to view both the historic park and the setting. They allow us to appreciate the reasons for the original development of the seaside resort here.



Figure 16 View along the High Street (east)



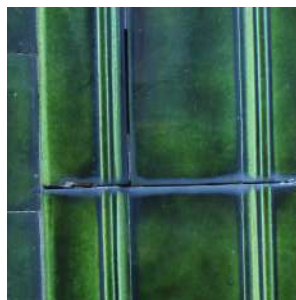
Figure 17 View towards Dovercourt lights in the setting of the Conservation area



Figure 18 View towards Beacon Hill Fort from Cliff Park



Figure 19 View towards the Station



3.4 Local Building Materials and Details

The predominant building material within the Conservation Area is red brick, with gault brick, brown brick, plaster and stone detailing contributing to the architectural interest and character of the building stock. Corner plot developments in particular are grandiose, with details including turrets, decorated gables, keystones, and brick detailing. As well as red brick, buildings are often painted or rendered and painted, typically in bright whites, creams or pastels characteristic of seaside towns. Orwell Road, for example, is characteristically bright due to its cream, Roman cement rendered frontages on the eastern side, and a high number of houses on Victoria Street are painted in bright traditional seaside pastel colour palette.

Throughout the Conservation Area windows are typically sash, although some have been replaced with uPVC particularly along the High Street. A high proportion of original doors, railings and shopfronts have been retained across the area.

Paving materials vary across the Conservation Area and are often unsympathetic, predominantly due to incremental changes. Notably, however, Crown Lane has a central paved band of Scoria Bricks, a clouded light blue brick which can also be found throughout towns in the Tendring District.

3.5 Landscaping, Open Spaces and Public Realm

The key area of open space within the Conservation Area is Cliff Park, located in the centre of the Conservation Area with wide reaching views to the south towards the coast. There are small areas of public realm elsewhere within the Conservation Area, however these are typically in need of maintenance and are currently unwelcoming to pedestrians.

Cliff Park

Cliff Park is a large formal garden, created in 1911 from the former grounds of Cliff House, the Villa of John Bagshaw. The park is verdant in character, with elements of its original designed landscape, including the formal gardens and avenue to the west evident and mature and specimen trees, scattered throughout. The low boundary wall to the north and the wide views to the south across the sea contribute to its open character and allow the park to provide a pleasant point to view the Conservation Area and its setting.

The park has been developed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and now contains a large area of open grassed lawn, with a restored bandstand to the north, children's park, outdoor gym and public restrooms to the south, and playing field to the east. Interpretive boards highlight the park's association with Cliff House, and the footprint of the demolished house is outlined on the grass in yellow brick.

These areas of the park are connected by red concrete walkways, and the promenade to the south is also laid in red concrete pavers. To the south along the promenade the land falls away towards the sea, where a line of beach huts and changing pavilions overlook the beach and timber groynes. These make a positive contribution to the coastal character of the park.

To the west the prominent building, the Grade II Listed 1-13 Orwell Road overlooks the park, with large mature trees set on a grassy slope to create a walkway along western side of the park.



Figure 20 Cliff Park



Figure 21 Station Forecourt

Station Forecourt

To the south of the Station is a large forecourt, formed at the junction of three routes to the Station: Kingsway, Station View and Station Road. Currently its overriding character is derived from its function and expanse of tarmac, where the wide Kingsway road meets Station Road. There is little in the way of coherent public realm to distinguish the road from the Station gateway, and the corner plots which overlook the Station are also predominantly occupied by parked cars. There is a small gravelled area immediately east of the Station with some benches and young planting, and opposite the Station is a triangular area marked by large concrete planters and advertisement boards. These advertisement boards dominate the space and are unsympathetic in their scale, colour, and material, and form the first impression for many of the Conservation Area. Enhancement of this space is an opportunity to provide a stronger sense of place and identity as a key place and gateway to the Conservation Area. The signage installed by the Harwich Society here is a good example of sympathetic street furniture and enhances the character and functionality of this gateway.



Figure 22 Kingsway Mural

Kingsway Mural

Along the western façade to Numbers 153-155 of the High Street is a large mural depicting features within Dovercourt, with a public bench beside it. This mural makes a positive contribution to our understanding of the Conservation Area and creates a sense of place.

High Street

Throughout the High Street, cast iron lampposts with decorative brackets and finials line the street and make a positive contribution to the historic character of the area. They are sympathetic in design and allow for hanging baskets, which also make a pleasant contribution to the densely built High Street providing a welcome element of greenery. The High Street also provides space for the Dovercourt Market, which is held every Friday; during the market a section of the High Street is pedestrianised, and the road is populated by a range of stalls. This temporary use as public realm makes a positive contribution to the character of the area, strengthening its sense of place and preserving traditions for the local community.

3.6 Contribution by Key Un-Listed Buildings

Although not recognised by listing designations, there are several key buildings of interest located throughout the Conservation Area:

230 High Street (TSB Bank)

Built in 1902, the bank is a landmark building at the junction of the High Street and Kingsway, due to its ornate architectural style and its prominent position. The building is two-storey with an additional attic floor in the steeply pitched roof. The ground level banking floor is given prominence with a greater floor to ceiling height than adjacent buildings and by extending out in front of the upper floors with a stone balustrade. The street-fronting gable ends facing, are distinctive features with curved stone detailing.



Figure 23 Dovercourt High Street

Barclays Bank

This red brick Queen Anne style building, constructed in 1902 with projecting bay at first floor, pediments, red brick quoins and Ionic pilasters is of architectural value and makes a positive contribution to the streetscape. It marks the southern border of the Conservation Area boundary. Its eastern frontage and entrance are ornate, its arched porch with finials and panelled door reflecting the former use of this building as a bank.

The Cabin Bakery

This two-storey red brick building, located on the north-western corner of the junction with Kingsway, dates from circa 1900. The upper floor elevations have remained largely unaltered and retain the original red and gault brick detailing and windows. There is a notable chimney stack on its eastern elevation, with arched brick detailing. The shop front has been replaced and extended along the Kingsway façade.

153 – 155 High Street (now Superdrug)

This three-storey building is dominated by its large windows at first and second floor level with stone string course, cornicing and keystone details, ornate carved inserts, rustication, and projecting quoins all adding interest and texture to the façade. Its north eastern corner, which fronts onto the junction of the High Street and Kingsway, is a prominent octagonal bay topped with a spire and weathervane. Its ground floor is dominated by the overly large and unsympathetic signage of Superdrug to the north, and to the west a large mural depicting scenes of Dovercourt.

42 – 46 Kingsway (Former Co-Operative Society Stores now Tofts)

This building is dominant in the street scape and visible in views along Kingsway and the High Street, the rear of the building also grand in architecture highlighting its former use as a concert hall. It is notable for its large and unique windows, with circular glass planes and curved first floor bays supported by ornately carved semi-circular corbels. The building boasts a turret and spire topped with a weathervane.



Figure 24 Barclays Bank



Figure 25 153 – 155 High Street (now Superdrug)

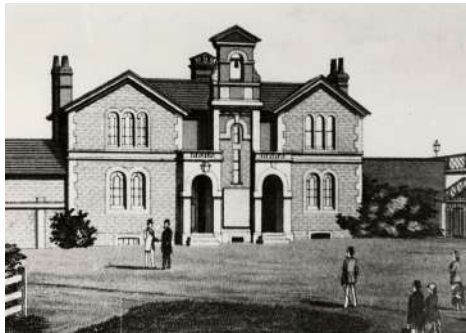


Figure 26 Dovercourt Station



Dovercourt Station

Built in 1854, the main part of the Station building, in red brick with yellow brick decorative features, is two storeys high with a pitched slate roof. It has unfortunately lost its original pedimented archway at roof level which has been replaced with the central pediment, but otherwise the building remains unchanged. The original single storey attached buildings remain. Early pictures also show a pedestrian bridge at the Station, presumably demolished when electrification of the railway took place. Access to the platform is through a gate on the west side of the building. Windows on the first floor of the building are boarded and the Station building appears to be unused.



Figure 27 The Library



The Library

The library building is of architectural and communal value, due to its historic function as a bus shed which is still legible in the architectural style of the building and its generous forecourt, and its current function as a library to serve Dovercourt and Harwich.

Former Alexandra Hotel

Officially opened on May 25th 1903, this is an important remaining example of an Edwardian hotel building on the seafront. It was visited by King Edward VII in 1905, resulting in the street name Kingsway.

3.7 Character Analysis

There are three distinct areas within the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area which form separate character areas, as shown on Figure 28. These are:

Character Area 1 - Built Core

Character Area 2 - Cliff Park

Character Area 3 - Beacon Hill Fort

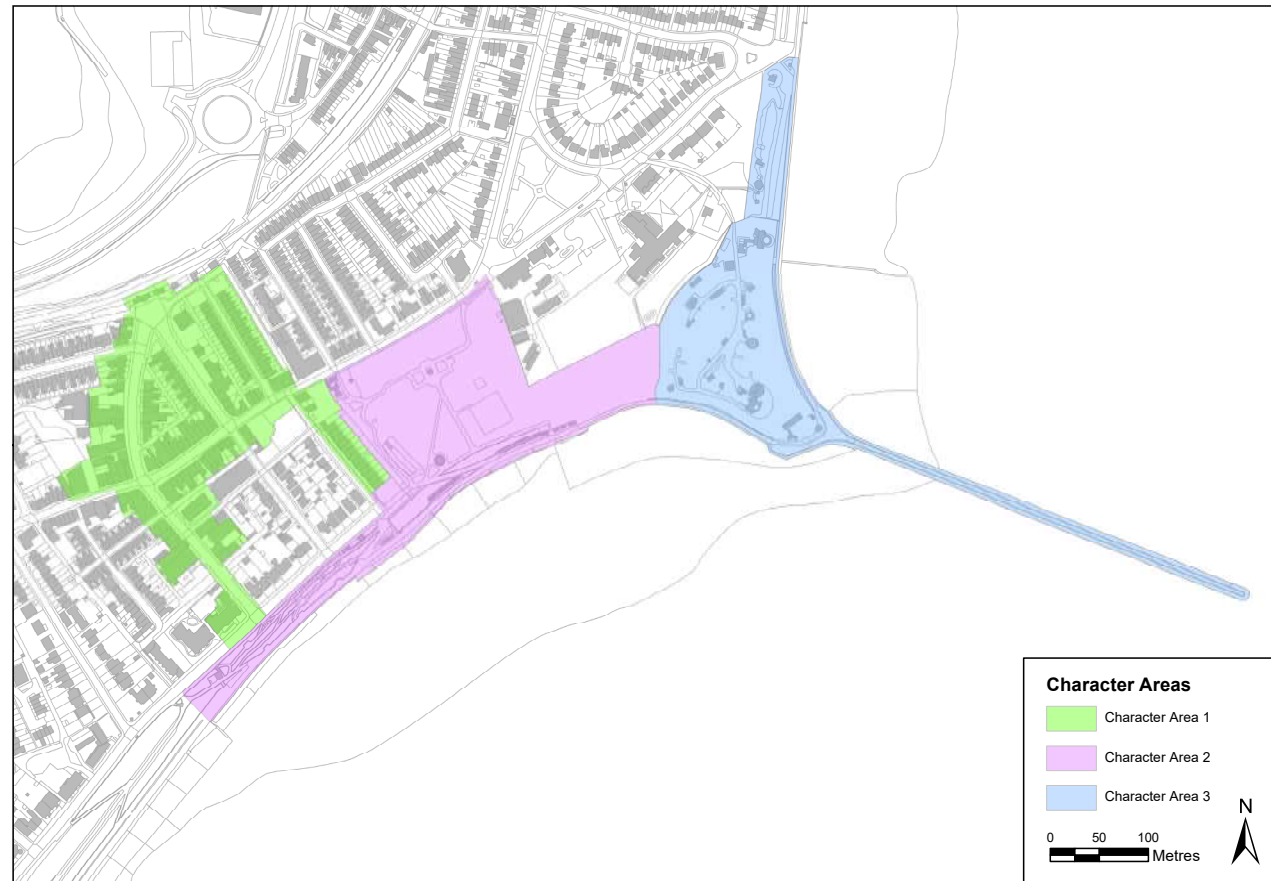


Figure 28 Map showing Character Areas

Area 1 – Built core

The built core of the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area is located to the west of the area, comprising the principal roads of High Street and Kingsway along with the streets which intersect these to the north and south. It is enclosed in character, with buildings predominantly between two and three storeys in height lining the pavements, and the streetscapes are dominated by these buildings which contribute to the historic built character of the area.

High Street

To the west of the High Street, the Conservation Area boundary is marked by a narrow, decorated building which was formerly a chapel and repurposed in the twentieth century as a shop. Its recognisable former uses make a positive contribution, with the intricate red and yellow brickwork with central lancet windows and the twentieth century blue tiled shopfront with original painted signage contributing to its historic and aesthetic value. Further east, the large stone fronted building is currently dominated by the overly large signage of Iceland, however, makes a positive contribution to the historic character of the area and notable for its mass and material. It is separated from the buildings to the east by Holly Close, a track which is varied in its paving material and provides rear access to buildings on the High Street and Kingsway. This area is generally in need of maintenance and unkempt in



Figure 29 Former Chapel on High Street

character, however, is not a prominent route within the Conservation Area.

To the east of Holly Close a stretch of two and three storey red brick buildings line the High Street to the north and south. These buildings are of architectural interest, particularly as a group, with the red brick punctuated by lighter stone detailing such as banding, keystones, quoins and pediments, with bay windows to the first floor on the south side of the road. Some features of the historic shopfronts have been preserved, such as the consoles, pilasters and corning, however the fascia and windows have often been unsympathetically altered.

At the junction of Kingsway and the High Street, a group of four prominent buildings overlook the crossing. They are each distinct in architectural style: the bakery (at



Figure 30 Shopfronts on the High Street

the north west of the junction) is of a modest scale with red and gault brick detailing and decorated chimney stacks; the bank (at the north east of the junction) is in red brick with Dutch gable ends, stone trimming, and ground floor pilasters; the south east building is three storey and a dark red brick with heavy black metal guttering and an octagonal tower with spire, creating a striking and prominent building in the streetscape; to the south west, a two storey red brick building with corner turret and spire is notable for its variety of window styles, including the unusual circular window pane inserts. This group makes a positive contribution to the historic built character of the area and marks the crossing of the two main routes within the area.

Further east on the High Street, the street scape is dominated by red brick buildings, with some bright white

and cream painted facades, which are predominantly three storeys in height with a strong rhythm in apertures to the north side and a characteristically varied frontages to the south. Many windows have been replaced with UPVC, and the ground floors are dominated by incoherent and unsympathetic fascia signs, however many buildings have retained their historic character. Some shopfront details have been retained and make a positive contribution, such as the green tiled pilasters and consoles between Numbers 212 – 218.

To the east of Station Road, the north of the High Street is built up in character, with typical red brick and cream painted render buildings of three storeys. These buildings have typically retained their historic architectural details; however, many are in need of



Figure 31 Green tiled console at the top of a pilaster

repairs and regular maintenance to enhance their aesthetic and ensure they make a positive contribution to the area. These currently overlook an empty plot to the south where recent demolition has taken place, which leaves an uncharacteristic break in the streetscape.

Kingsway

The south of Kingsway is at a high point, which permits long views to the north along the road and contributes to its built-up character. The buildings here are a range of materials, massing, and height, which contributes to an interesting streetscape. To the south east are two twentieth century buildings with some architectural details of interest including the original tiling of Numbers 37 – 39 and the chimney stacks of Numbers 41 – 45 Kingsway. Further north, the former Co-operative Society (now a Wetherspoon public house and hotel), is a grand building with large front windows to the main façade and two storey columns with fine detailing. Opposite this, the Harwich Library is a building of note, with a large triangular gabled front and arched window set back slightly from the street by a paved courtyard, its former use as a bus station discernible in its architectural style. A mature street tree in front of the library building contributes to the character of this area, an example of the trees which once lined Kingsway and formed an avenue along this key street.

Adjacent to the Library is Number 31, a building of unusual massing including one storey, two storey and three storey sections which step back from the street and lead the eye to the unusual stepped gable with decorative fanlight windows and stone detailing.



Figure 32 Market Hall

Between Milton Road and Bagshaw Road are the large Grade II Listed Market Hall and Railings on South East and South West Sides. This building, a former church in Italianate style, is dominant due to its size and central tower with decorative corncing and circular windows, topped with a weathervane. The building, which is in a poor

state of repair, now functions as an indoor market. Opposite the market hall a row of well-preserved pre and post-war shops are notable for their original shopfront detail including entrance tiling, pilasters, iron brackets and covers. Further north, the buildings are red brick with rendered ground floors and fine detailing. The Dovercourt Mural makes a positive contribution to the area and illustrates attractions within the town.

To the north of High Street, the road curves slightly to the east towards the station, affording views which are framed by the historic buildings. On street parking also lines the roads and creates some visual clutter, exacerbated by the curve of the road. Buildings here are typical of the materials used in the character area, ranging from red brick with some that have been rendered painted white or cream, and details such as stone quoins, brick banding, and keystones frequenting. On the east side, Numbers 5-17 form a pleasant group of red brick Victorian terracing, with recessed arch porches, two storey bays and small front garden plots creating consistency to the character on this side of the road. On the western side of the road, there is a greater variety of architectural styles, massing and alignment. Numbers 36-38 have been heavily altered, the historic shopfront replaced with UPVC fascia, windows and doors. Number 32-34 is a rendered 1930's Art Deco style facade providing



Figure 33 Numbers 5-17 Kingsway

interest to the street, although currently vacant and in need of maintenance to restore its historic character. Further north, buildings are typically red brick with stone detailing or rendered. The northern end of Kingsway opens out with buildings set back from the wide road and pavements; there are views towards the backs of properties, and a variety of boundary treatments and paving creates an incoherent character here, which is inconsistent with the built streetscape of Kingsway. Parking here is informal, with cars utilising the on-street parking as well as the large areas of paving; this detracts from the open character of the street which was originally planned as a grand, tree-lined avenue



Figure 34 Statue of Queen Victoria

and approach to the Station. The area extends to the south to take in the former Alexandra Hotel (the sole remaining example of an Edwardian hotel building on the seafront) and the Statue of Queen Victoria, which terminates the view along Kingsway and acts as a landmark in the area.

Station Forecourt

The junction of Kingsway and Station Road forms the forecourt of the Station. The overriding character here is derived from the expanse of tarmac roads, wide pavements, and front gardens plots which have been paved for private parking. This area is predominantly occupied by parked cars. There is a small gravelled area immediately east of the Station with some benches and young planting, and opposite the Station is a triangular area marked by large concrete planters and unsympathetic advertisement boards. The Station forecourt provides an opportunity to promote a stronger sense of place and identity as a gateway to the Conservation Area.

Station Road

Opposite the Station, a long vista to the south stretches from Station Road to Bay Road. This open view enhances appreciation of the coastal location of the Conservation Area and understanding of its

development. The buildings on Station Road are predominantly residential Victorian terracing to the west and larger commercial buildings to the east. These are all characteristically red brick or rendered with gault brick detailing. To the west, some buildings have retained their timber windows, and all have retained their small front garden plots with boundary treatment separating the houses from the pavement. To the east, the large commercial buildings are set back from the pavement however they have lost their boundary treatment to allow for parking; this detracts from the historic character of the buildings and street scene. To the south east of the road, some historic shopfront details have been retained, which make a positive contribution to the area.



Figure 35 Empty plot on the site of the demolished Victoria Hotel

Station View

Station View forms the northern boundary of the Conservation Area and is disparate in character. It connects a series of lanes and streets with the High Street and is dominated by these junctions and the empty plot of the demolished Grade II Listed Victoria Hotel. This vacant plot is overgrown and enclosed by a high fence, which makes a negative contribution to the street scene due to its neglect. Three twenty-first century dwellings to the north of the road make a neutral contribution, sympathetic in their building material and style, and overlook the junction of each street.

Crown Lane

Crown Lane is a narrow alley connecting the High Street to Station Road; it is paved with a central band of scoria bricks, typical of Tendring District's vernacular. The character of this lane is drawn from views to the rear of the tall



Figure 36 Scoria bricks on Crown Lane



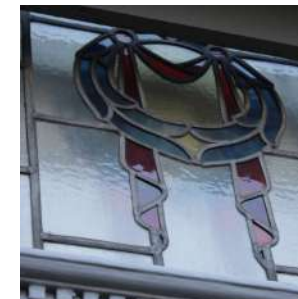
buildings which line adjacent streets, and the rear gardens bounded by high close board fencing. It is enclosed in character but impacted by the unsympathetic and inconsistent boundary treatment and condition of property boundaries.

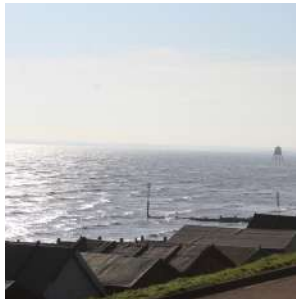
Victoria Street

Victoria Street comprises Victorian terraced dwellings, colourful in character, with the majority of red brick buildings painted in a bright seaside palette. Many buildings have retained original features such as timber windows, doorways with circular panel details, iron railings and consistent chimney stacks which create a characterful roofscape. Some buildings are in need of maintenance to preserve their historic character and architectural details, and the western side of the street in particular is adversely impacted by satellite dishes.

Orwell Road

Orwell Road includes a number of prominent buildings. The Grade II Listed 101 and 103 Main Road and Grade II Listed The Convent (known as Orwell Terrace). These rendered buildings, painted in bright cream, are grand in their architectural style and reflect the aspirations of Bagshaw and his seaside resort. Numbers 1 – 13 are particularly prominent, its northern end is five storeys in height, the remainder of the building is punctuated by porches supported by pilasters and decorated with cornicing, with quoins, pedimented windows, and parapet adding architectural interest. The iron railings to the ground floor and first floor windows also enhance the historic character. The northern end of the building has been lost, which detracts from the symmetry of the building. The empty plot here, and the empty plot to the north of the building where the former Grade II Listed Park Hotel once stood (since demolished), detracts from the grand character of this street and are overgrown and unkept. Views towards the sea, to the north, from this street enhance appreciation of the character area.





Area 2 – Cliff Park

Cliff Park’s character is drawn from the garden and park areas, their associated features, and its panoramic views to the south of Dovercourt Bay and the North Sea. The north west of the park comprises formal gardens which surround the Grade II Listed Garden House. Mature planting to the south and northern boundaries of the park provide a screen from surrounding buildings and contribute to its verdant character, and recent bulb planting along the northern boundary of the park provides a colourful garden character.

The bandstand is a focal point in the park, surrounded by shrub planting and benches. The bandstand has been recently refurbished and has retained historic details and decorative brackets which make a positive contribution to the park. To the north of the bandstand, interpretive boards and bricks outlining the original floorplan of Cliff House contribute to the understanding of the historic origins and subsequent development of the park.

Further south, the park is open in character, with large lawns and open views to the south contributing to its character. The designed park extends west to Mill Lane. It is comprised of separate areas, linked by red paved walks, including the modern outdoor gym, children’s play area, public toilets and café, seafront and playing field. These modern elements make a neutral contribution to the historic character and appearance of the park and are of communal value.



Area 3 – Beacon Hill Fort

Beacon Hill Fort is a Scheduled Monument located on the eastern side within the Conservation Area. It is situated on the protruding land which overlooks Dovercourt Bay and the North Sea. The area is defined by historic military use, comprising a range of buildings which survive from 1860 onwards which are associated with the defensive site. It is also green in character with two distinct areas of flora and fauna; to the east is a stretch of low shrubland which stretches to the foreshore and to the west the trees are mature and denser.

The surviving buildings are dispersed throughout the area, with a central route connecting the entrance to the site in the north with the World War One 6in gun emplacements to the south. High ground to the east allows for the key buildings to have the best vantage point, with underground structures located between them and to the west. The buildings are constructed in concrete and brick, functional in design and large in their scale and mass. The topography and planting within the area screens some buildings from view, adding to the interest of the site as features reveal themselves as visitors move through the area. The site is accessed from the north via a driveway and gate and is traversed by the main road through the centre of the

site and a network of wood chip nature trails, which connect the features and provide signage.

There are a variety of boundary treatments across the area (the site is under three separate ownerships) each with differing treatments ranging from high modern metal fencing and wooden fencing throughout. This has impacted the condition of the buildings and features within the site, as some areas have been subject to substantial vandalism due to penetrable fencing and subsequent trespassing.

The site has recently been cleared of considerable vegetation and revealed that buildings and features throughout the site are in various states of repair. The majority have been affected by vandalism and overgrown vegetation, with many in need of works to conserve them. Of the surviving buildings many have been altered, some quite radically during later modifications to the fort and particularly during World War Two, and the legible development of these buildings enhances our understanding of the history of the area. No evidence survives of the fortifications dated prior to 1889 at Beacon Hill as most of them, such as the original seventeenth century blockhouse, have been lost to coastal erosion.





3.8 Beyond the Conservation Area Boundary

Setting is described in the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as being “the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced... 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”. In paragraph 013 of the Planning Practice Guidance, it is stated that all heritage assets have a setting. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as sensory experiences and our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, sites that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

This section discusses attributes of setting to the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area, and how setting contributes to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset.

The sea shares a strong visual and historic and functional relationship with the Conservation Area and is the reason why the historic settlement developed here. Its coastal location provided an ideal vantage point for the defences at Beacon Hill Fort and inspired Bagshaw to create his seaside resort on the cliffs. The North Sea is visible from key points within the Conservation Area, including Cliff Park, Beacon Hill Fort, and Orwell Road; this experience enhances the appreciation, experience and understanding of the Conservation Area. Not only is the sea visible from the Conservation Area, it also contributes to our sensory experience of the area, through sounds, smells and climate.

To the north, wide views over the River Stour can be seen from high points within the Conservation Area, notably from Bay Road and from the Station platform itself, which also make a positive contribution to the setting of the character of the area and highlight its unique topography and location.

Beyond the Queen Victoria Statue are views towards the coastline to the south, which can be appreciated from the edge of the Conservation Area. Those who walk the parade can experience the character and qualities of the Conservation Area which contribute to its special interest, such as through glimpsed views of the Conservation Area, and appreciate its close relationship with the sea.

The setting of the built core of the Conservation Area has some adverse impact on its significance. Russell Rise, the Telephone Exchange, and the Multi-Storey car park for example, are unsympathetic in their scale, mass and building materials, appearing intrusive and detracting from views of the traditional building stock within the area. The Telephone Exchange is of an inappropriate height and character, and is prominent in views along Kingsway, adversely impacting the setting of the Conservation Area through its dominant and unsympathetic appearance.



Figure 37 Seaside setting of the Conservation Area to the south west, with views towards the lighthouse

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 Dovercourt, with many being shared with other Conservation Areas.

4.1 Access and Integration

There is scope for enhancements to generate a more coherent flow between the elements of the Conservation Area including the Station, commercial High Street, Cliff Park and seafront. The Station acts as a gateway to the Conservation Area and forms the first impression of the area for many; currently, the Station and Station forecourt are lacking in place-making, and there is little wayfinding or design elements which create a sense of identity within the forecourt. By reinstating features which work to identify key routes, such as street trees, street furniture, sympathetic signage, and paving, and by encouraging pedestrian access through consolidation of parking, pedestrians can be encouraged to navigate the Conservation Area with greater ease and understanding of its significance.

4.2 Beacon Hill Fort

Beacon Hill Fort comprises a significant portion of the Conservation Area and is a designated heritage asset of high significance. It is currently included on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register with ‘extensive, significant problems’ and in need of management.

A Draft Action Management Plan of Beacon Hill Fort by Tendring District Council in 1989 highlighted the opportunity to restore and develop the area into a museum/ heritage site. The site is complex, with elements of the site owned by Essex County



Figure 38 An example of good, sympathetic signage within the Conservation Area, which could be introduced throughout the area



Figure 39 An example of vandalism at Beacon Hill Fort

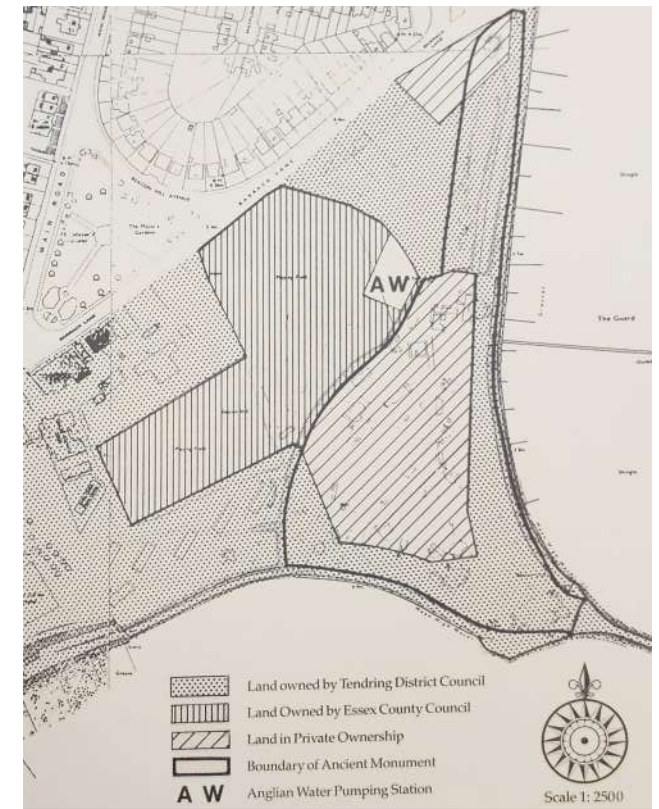


Figure 40 Map demonstrating ownership of Beacon Hill Fort (Source Tendring District Council)

Council, Tendring District Council, and privately, the boundaries of which can be seen on Figure 40. This means that collaboration between all owners and stakeholders is required to ensure it is appropriately and effectively conserved. Its designation as a Scheduled Monument also requires the early engagement of Historic England.

It is considered that there is opportunity for collaboration between owners of the site to ensure the site is secure and to produce a formal management plan. There is also opportunity to continue to engage the local community and utilise the group of dedicated volunteers who have undertaken the clearance of vegetation to the site and to continue to develop it into a heritage attraction.

4.3 Car Parking

Within the built core of the Conservation Area there is an excessive amount of on-street parking and tarmacked plots which are used for commercial and private parking. The most notable area of parking is outside of the Station. This area is dominated by parked cars due to the informal parking outside the station, the on-street parking which lines Kingsway and Station View, and the commercial parking at the car dealership opposite the station. The high number of vehicles which use this road and the density of parked cars detracts from the historic character of the buildings here and is not reflective of the original design of the space. Historic images show this area to be a wide tree-lined avenue which leads to the grand station building; small bollards, streetlights and a stone drinking fountain demarcate the station forecourt and create an aesthetic space and gateway to Dovercourt. The prioritisation of cars within this space now detracts from the visitor's experience and appreciation of the special interest of the area.



Figure 41 Examples of parking areas close to the Station and Station Forecourt

4.4 Inappropriate Modern Development

Within the Conservation Area there are very few modern developments, and the majority of buildings are of historic origin. A small, one storey concrete, development on a vacant plot on Orwell Road is inappropriate in its building material and architectural style and does not appear to have received planning permission for its construction. Other than this structure, modern inappropriate development is found within the setting of the Conservation Area, such as the Telephone Exchange, Russell Rise, and two-storey car park on Bagshaw Road.

4.5 Neutral Contributors and Maintenance

A number of buildings make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, due to their current condition. The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral impacts overall character, particularly in Dovercourt where almost the entirety of its building stock is of historic origin. However, due to maintenance and condition of these buildings there are many which would have a positive impact but are instead considered to be neutral. There is scope to enhance these buildings to restore them and conserve historic features, this would result in their enhancement as heritage assets and their contribution to the Conservation Area.



Figure 42 Examples of maintenance issues across the Conservation Area

4.6 Public Realm

Street Furniture

Many areas of the Conservation Area, particularly those which have received grant funding in the past, have high quality street furniture. Along the High Street, for example, the lampposts are sympathetic to the historic character of the area and are black painted metal with decorative brackets and finial with hanging baskets. Introducing these throughout the Conservation Area would have a positive impact and enhance the street scape.

There is currently some signage throughout the area, including a map outside the Station, a Harwich Society funded post, and a sign to the Harwich Redoubt in Cliff Park which are good examples of signage which is sympathetic to the historic character of the area. There are a high number of benches throughout the Conservation Area, which enhance how we can experience the area and in particular they provide spaces within the park to appreciate the historic landscape. These benches should be regularly inspected and maintained, as there are some which are in need of repairs.

Hard Landscaping

Surface treatment is a concern within the Conservation Area. There is scope to consolidate and dramatically enhance road treatments throughout the Conservation Area and particularly within the core. Historic images of the High Street show that scoria bricks once paved the gutter (Figure 43) and pedestrian crossing points. These bricks can still be found on Crown Lane but have been lost throughout the rest of the Conservation Area. To reintroduce them in the Conservation Area would be an enhancement.

Should this Conservation Area be a receipt of funding, it is considered that the creation of a shared surface on the High Street between Station Road and Kingsway, or demarcation of this space with scoria brick bands, may enhance the character of this commercial core and reflect its use as a weekly market.

Trees and Planting

Historic images of the Conservation Area illustrate the contribution that trees once made to its character and appearance. The characteristically wide streets were once tree lined avenues, creating impressive streetscapes and breaking up the densely built up character with welcome greenery (Figure 44).

The reintroduction of these trees, and the maintenance of those which do survive, would be beneficial to the character of the area. It would reinstate the former design of the avenues and integration of trees into the planned resort.

Inspection and maintenance of the mature and specimen trees in Cliff Park is also considered to be beneficial to ensure that they continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the area. This could be achieved through a maintenance plan for the trees within the area.

4.7 Shop Frontages

There are a number of overly large and unsympathetic fascia signs which are prevalent along the High Street and Kingsway. These signs detract from the historic character of shopfronts in the area, many of which retain other historic features such as pilasters, tiles, entrance porches and cornicing. There are also examples of alterations to signage and shopfronts which have been made without consent, resulting in harmful additions to the Conservation Area.



Figure 43 Scoria bricks visible lining the gutters along the High Street (1920)



Figure 44 Trees along Station Road, 1910



There is opportunity to enhance these features through the replacement of unsympathetic signs and the reinstatement and conservation of historic architectural features which would cumulatively benefit the Conservation Area. The replacement of the Superdrug sign on the High Street in particular would be a key improvement to undertake, as this currently makes a negative impact to the junction of Kingsway and the High Street. The Iceland building on the High Street is also a notably large and unsympathetic treatment to a historic building.

4.8 Vacant Premises

The high number of vacant premises and plots have been identified as a key concern for the Conservation Area. They make a negative contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and pose a threat to its continued decline.

Lack of maintenance and subsequent piecemeal demolition has resulted in a number of large vacant plots across the Conservation Area. Notably, these are located where the following buildings stood prior to their demolition: The Grade II Listed Victoria Hotel, the Grade II Park Hotel, the southern wing of the Grade II Orwell Road terrace, and the row of buildings on the High Street which included the Queens Hotel. These buildings were all historic in character and made a key contribution to our appreciation of Dovercourt as a planned seaside resort; however, due to lack of maintenance and regeneration they have been lost. The empty plots which they have left have fallen into further neglect, particularly on the site of Victoria Hotel where the vegetation is now causing damage to the adjacent building on Victoria Road and threatening its condition. These sites provide opportunity for enhancement to either maintain the spaces and prevent their further decline by finding an interim use for them prior to their development, or through redevelopment to reinstate their former built character. Any development should be bespoke high quality development which enhances

or better reveals the significance of the Conservation Area, in line with the NPPF paragraph 200.

There are also a number of vacant buildings and upper floors throughout the Conservation Area. At the time of assessment (Feb 2020), these included:

- 252 High Street;
- 180-182 High Street;
- 32-34 Kingsway;
- 37-39 Kingsway;
- Station building; and
- 20 Victoria Street.

It is considered that vacant buildings are at risk of deterioration and there is opportunity to bring these sites back into use and occupation, this would ensure their sustainable conservation.

If there are examples of vacant upper floors within the area, and many external elevations of upper floors are in poor condition. This impacts on the overall appearance of the historic building stock and the ability to appreciate them as heritage assets, particularly as many of the ground floors of these buildings have undergone modern interventions to their historic fascia leaving the upper floors as the predominant reminder of a building's age and historic quality.



5. Management Proposals

There are a wide range of issues facing the Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This chapter seeks to recommend management proposals which address some of 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.

- 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. This is especially important in relation to the east side of Station Road.
- Provide guidance on traditional roofing materials and encouraging the reinstatement

of good quality slate and 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.

Condition Assessment

The entire Conservation Area would benefit from the completion of a condition assessment of the positive buildings within it, as many are in need of repairs. The condition assessment would allow for the creation of a prioritised plan for repairs, to prevent the further decline of buildings that are most at risk.

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

The maintenance and consolidation of street furniture would be beneficial to the Conservation Area; in particular, the introduction of sympathetic lampposts as found on the High Street and the regular maintenance of benches would enhance how the area is experienced.

Planning and Highways should work together to agree standard good practice within the Conservation Area such as avoiding excessive road markings and where necessary using narrow road markings as well as looking for opportunities to reinstate local features such as scoria bricks.

Heritage Statements

In accordance with the NPPF (Para.194), 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, trees 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.

Improved Understanding and Awareness

There is currently interpretation within the Conservation Area aimed at improving understanding and awareness. This is predominantly through information boards and some heritage interpretation within Cliff Park.

Existing interpretation should be assessed and

maintained, and opportunity for further interpretation explored. Increasingly, digital awareness can contribute to our understanding of a place; the webpage for the Scheduled Monument Beacon Hill Fort, run privately and by volunteers, is an example of a method of improving awareness online. Other methods of improving understanding through signage, leaflets, talks or events could also be an effective way to improve the awareness and re-establish the identity of Dovercourt as a historic settlement.

Local Heritage List

Dovercourt would benefit from adopting and maintaining a comprehensive Local List in order to preserve its historic environment from further deterioration. 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.

In recent years, the demolition of the Queens Head Hotel, the alteration of historic shopfronts on the High Street and Kingsway, and the poor maintenance of buildings, indicates that a Local List may be beneficial to ensure the upkeep of buildings which are significant to Dovercourt's history and character. The exercise would also facilitate a greater understanding of the area and could be utilised as a public engagement

strategy to improve awareness and understanding.

There are a number of buildings within the Conservation Area which are of sufficient quality to be considered for local list status, as highlighted in Section 2.6.

Neutral Elements

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

Tendring District Council should not allow for the quality of design to be 'averaged down' by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment. Given the Conservation Area is at risk in part due to maintenance of buildings, 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 Dovercourt, 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 may:

- Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land;
- Sit harmoniously in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths);
- Respect important views;
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings;
- Use materials and building methods which are 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.

Tendring 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.

- The choice of materials and the detailed design of building features are important in making sure it's appropriate to a Conservation Area.
- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

Public Facing 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.

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Dovercourt's built heritage. Some further guidance on the maintenance of traditional buildings is included within the appendix of this document (Section 6.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance).

Shop Frontages

A particular concern throughout the Conservation Area is the use of inappropriate signage and the loss or alteration of traditional shopfronts. Signs are often dominant in views, concealing architectural details on the buildings and therefore can negatively impact our ability to read the historic character of the town. In the short term, a review of the town's approach to signage and shopfronts, perhaps through a design guide, might allow for some cohesion across the Conservation Area and reinstate a rhythm to the historic frontages.

An initial focus on Superdrug's signage would be beneficial, as it is located on a prominent junction and on a landmark building. This currently overwhelms the streetscape detracting from its historic character.



Tree Management

In line with national guidance and Tendring District Council's policy, all trees in Conservation Areas which have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm, at a height of 1.5m from the ground, may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks written notice has been given to the Council.

It is also considered that any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the Conservation Area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. This will ensure the symmetry along tree lined streets and visual rhythm, as well as maintain green spaces of the area. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

It is also considered that the reintroduction of street trees where possible would enhance the historic character of the area.

5.2 Positive Management: Long Term

The following proposals are also focused around positive management but either take longer to implement or are better suited to a longer time frame.

Access and Integration

Local Authorities are increasingly updating their access strategies, to reflect a better understanding of pedestrian movement, desire lines and existing barriers. The Lower Dovercourt Conservation Area would benefit from a similar approach to ascertain how pedestrians travel between the key elements within the area; the Station, High Street, Cliff Park, seafront and Beacon Hill Fort. This can inform future schemes and create a hierarchy of streets and spaces across the area.

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 Tendring District Council in conjunction with local stakeholders.

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Conservation Area and its boundary have been revised within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2021) and *Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management* (2019). The boundary now includes areas of historic significance which improve our

understanding of the development of the Conservation Area in the twentieth century.

The Conservation Area should be reviewed every five years to monitor change and inform management proposals. The boundary should be assessed as part of this review to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.

Opportunity Sites

As discussed above in Section 4, there are a variety of opportunity sites across the Conservation Area. These are chiefly comprised the vacant plots of the former Victoria Hotel, Queens Hotel, and Park Hotel. There is also the opportunity to reinstate the south side of Grade II Listed terracing on Orwell Road, which is currently also a vacant plot and detracts from the character of the listed building and street. These sites would benefit from further consideration for sensitive redevelopment, and steps should be taken to mitigate the damage they currently cause to neighbouring properties and negative impact they have on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Station forecourt is considered to be an area for opportunity and would benefit from a considered and coherent approach to parking and the conservation or addition of features which contribute to its status as



a key site and gateway into the area, such as street furniture, planting, and interpretation.

Public Realm and Interpretation

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.

A considered and more consistent approach to aspects of the public realm would enhance the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area; features such as street furniture, signage, information boards, planting, paving, and railings are recommended for consideration. The high quality of the features on the High Street currently juxtapose with the rest of the Conservation Area, and a variety of styles of street furniture exist across the area. Due to this variety of approaches, a high-level overview or design guide to ensure a consistent maintenance and design approach would be beneficial. This approach can prove cost effective in the long-term maintenance of the spaces, saving dispersed review.

Shop Frontages

There is substantial scope for long term 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 areas character and appearance.

There is also scope to enhance the character of the commercial centre through the production of a design guide for shopfronts and signage, which will create a clearer approach to the design of new shop frontages and management of historic examples.

5.3 Funding Opportunities

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

National Lottery Heritage Fund

The National Lottery 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 NLHF schemes Tendring 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 Dovercourt. 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.



6. Appendices

6.1 Bibliography

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Archives

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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) DLUGH	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2014) DLUGH	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England Advice Note 1 (2019) Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management	
National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets	
National Guidance	Historic England (2019) Statements of Heritage Significance Advice Note 12	
National Guidance	Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 (2015) Managing Significance in Decision- Taking in the Historic Environment	



National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Traditional Windows	
National Guidance	Historic England (2016) Stopping the Rot	
National Guidance	Historic England, High Streets for All (2018) Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places	
National Guidance	Historic England (2020) Conserving Georgian and Victorian terraced housing	
National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Repointing Brick and Stone Walls Guide for Best Practice	
Local Policy	Tendring District Local Plan 2013 - 2033 and Beyond (2022)	Section 2

6.3 Glossary (National Planning Policy Framework)

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.

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