

## 1. MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

- 1.1 As part of the appraisal process the boundaries have been considered. The area includes important buildings, open land and marsh land. The existing boundaries are logical and well defined and include the key components of the area's character. It is not therefore proposed to amend the boundary.
- 1.2 It is recommended that an Article 4 (2) Direction is required to strengthen planning controls in both Rochford District and Chelmsford Borough. This will place limitations on further unsympathetic alterations, including replacement of traditional windows or alterations to the external cladding, carried out under permitted development rights. Such alterations constitute a threat to the distinctiveness of the conservation area. It is also important that alterations to boundary treatments are appropriate to the informal and rural character of the area. It is therefore proposed that the following works should require planning permission under an Article 4 direction:-
- Alterations to a property affecting windows, doors or other openings, including the insertion of dormer or other windows in the roof, replacement of windows and doors, and changes to roofing materials.
  - The application of render or cladding to the external walls of a dwelling house, or the painting of unpainted brickwork.
  - The erection or construction of any fences, gates or other forms of enclosure to the front or sides of a dwelling house, or the alteration of fences, walls or other forms of enclosure if they adjoin the highway.
- 1.3 The conservation area contains many unlisted traditional buildings which are both locally significant and contribute to the character of the area. Some of these were formerly on the Rochford District Council Local List of Buildings of Architectural, Historic and Townscape Importance (Timber Wharf Cottages, Mill House, Telfords and associated outbuildings). These buildings were covered by a Local Plan policy which set out to encourage owners to avoid demolition, unsympathetic alteration or changes which would diminish their value in architectural, historic or townscape terms. The Replacement Local Plan discontinued the practice of local listing. Whilst local listing was not always successful in achieving its aims, it recognised the contribution of unlisted buildings to the conservation area and set out to protect them. It is recommended that Local Listing is reinstated, and that a new list is drawn up in consultation with the local community. This may form part of parish-wide surveys of buildings of local significance on both sides of the river, including buildings outside the conservation area as well as those within it.

- 1.4 Policies with regard to advertising should be rigorously applied to the south of the river where advertising is particularly intrusive. The Rochford District Replacement Local Plan contains policies SAT8-11 which are relevant to advertising in conservation areas. Whilst these policies give a degree of control over advertising within the conservation area, consideration should be given to creating an Area of Special Control Order around Battlesbridge Harbour, Battlesbridge Mills Garden Centre and the tide mill.
- 1.5 An enforcement strategy should be in place, and the conservation area regularly monitored for unauthorised alterations and other changes that may pose a threat to the special character of the area. This may take the form of a regular photographic survey of the area, perhaps every four years. More regular monitoring of the floodgates is required, as these listed structures have been identified as being particularly vulnerable through neglect or decay.

### Enhancement Opportunities

- 1.6 Various opportunities exist to enhance the character of the conservation area. Some of these will only be possible over the long term, for example as Highways improvements are made or as and when opportunities arise during the course of other works. Others may be implemented more quickly by the local authority once this appraisal has been adopted, for example reviewing intrusive advertising. Funding opportunities will need to be identified for many of these proposals, such as community funding or landscape improvement grants. The following enhancement opportunities are indicated on the map below (*Fig. 52*).
1. The river is a strong feature and the heart of the conservation area. At present public access to the riverside is limited and the visual link with the river eroded by the sea wall. Improved access to appreciate the river would be a significant enhancement. Improved landscaping, access and seating on the northern side, between the bridge and granary is one area with potential which could be achieved by Chelmsford Borough Council working with the Environment Agency.
  2. The car park of the antiques centre has been surfaced in tarmac, with standard white line markings, which gives a harsh and urban appearance. Chelmsford Borough Council should encourage the landowner when resurfacing is required to use a surface treatment which gives a textured, natural, semi rural appearance, such as bound shingle, with subtle markings.
  3. The church hall is an important local facility in a prominent position, but is a prefabricated building which is now in a poor condition. Replacement with a new structure using good quality

materials would be desirable, and community funding should be sought by the church authorities for this with the support of Chelmsford Borough Council. Removal of the storage container to the rear and improvement to the church windows could also form part of this scheme.

4. The main approach to the bridge on the northern side is cluttered with signs at present. Rationalisation of these signs would improve the setting of the bridge and granary and approach to the river's edge. Where stone kerbstones have survived along Hawk Hill (not marked on map) these should be retained and reinstated where they have been lost, in preference to concrete kerbs which have a flat and lifeless appearance in comparison. This will require the co-operation of Essex County Council Highways team and Chelmsford Borough Council.
5. The conifer trees on the main approach from the west along Hawk Hill are an alien and oppressive feature. Chelmsford Borough Council should encourage the landowner to replace these with a native hedge, such as hawthorn, which would be a vast improvement to the conservation area.
6. The southern riverbank is quite prominent in views south from the area around the antiques centre and from the bridge itself. However the Battlesbridge Harbour area appears untidy and detracts from these views. Opportunities to enhance the appearance of this area should be sought by Rochford District Council working with the landowner, either through improvements made within the site itself or through screening, with native hedging and tree planting for example.
7. Battlesbridge Harbour is also untidy viewed from the Chelmsford Road, and would benefit from an improved boundary treatment and screening, less cluttered advertising and a more attractively landscaped entrance. Rochford District Council should encourage the landowner to undertake these improvements.
8. The garden centre is prominent along the Chelmsford Road, but has a poor boundary fence which could be replaced with a more appropriate boundary treatment appropriate for the rural context of the conservation area such as timber post and rail or native hedging, as well as rationalisation of the advertising. The drainage ditch running along the road edge here is also untidy. Rochford District Council should encourage the landowner to make improvements here.
9. The lock gates are currently in a very poor condition and are on the County Council's buildings at risk register. These gates are both historically important and a vital element in the attractive

views across the river channel to the old mill. The landowner should be encouraged to repair these structures by Rochford District Council.

10. The old tide mill frequently has unauthorised advertisements which are intrusive in views across the river. This should be monitored, with formal action being taken where necessary, and Rochford District Council should work with the owner to ensure advertising is appropriate for this highly sensitive location.
11. Approaching the conservation area from the south along Chelmsford Road the road edge on the prominent bend west is cluttered with signage and old street furniture. Rationalisation and replacement with more sensitively designed signs would enhance the appearance of the conservation area, and this will require the cooperation of Rochford District Council and Essex County Council Highways team (*Fig. 51*). In addition if Highways works are carried out replacement of concrete kerbstones with natural stone would enhance the appearance of the public realm.



*Fig. 51 Street signs and furniture, Chelmsford Road.*

12. There is a redundant traffic sign post on the south side of the bridge which should be removed by Essex County Council Highways team.
13. A redundant industrial building along the Chelmsford Road currently detracts from the appearance of the conservation area, and has an untidy verge. Rochford District Council should work with the owner to seek the repair and reuse of this building or replacement with an appropriate building of good quality design and materials. In conjunction with this the grass verge and area to the roadside of Quay House should be tidied and improved.