

London Borough of Havering

# Romford Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals



*prepared by*  
**The Paul Drury Partnership**

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Extract from *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (English Heritage, 2006)

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Designation report for Romford Conservation Area (1967/68)

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## Romford Conservation Area Character Appraisal

### 1.0 Introduction and background

#### 1.1 The historical development of Havering

The London Borough of Havering, the second largest London borough, has a population of about 225,000 and covers an area of 11,227 hectares (approximately 40 square miles), half of which lies within the Green Belt. To the north and east, the borough is bordered by the Essex countryside and, to the south, by a three mile River Thames frontage; but although the M25 defines its outer edge, the character of the Essex landscape and its villages extends into the borough well within both the motorway and the administrative boundary between Greater London and Essex. Pevsner<sup>1</sup> remarks of Havering that *“the character of its buildings is shared equally between the suburbia of its western neighbours and the rural vernacular of the Essex countryside. This mix is unique in East London, comprising still remote medieval parish churches along the Thames marshlands, tiny rural villages, farmhouses set in open fields, a scattering of mansions, leafy Edwardian suburbia, and at its heart the brash commercialism of Romford.”* This summary is also an appropriate description for the range of conservation areas in Havering.

1.2 The London Borough of Havering was created in 1965 from Romford Borough and Hornchurch Urban District, reviving the name of the medieval Liberty of Havering, to which they once belonged. The administrative origins of Havering are in the medieval parishes which were grouped together to form the administrative units of Chafford Hundred in the south, and the Royal Manor and Liberty of Havering in the north and west. The Liberty consisted of three large parishes<sup>2</sup>: Romford, as the market town; Havering atte Bower, where the royal palace stood till the 17<sup>th</sup> century; and Hornchurch. Chafford Hundred had a cluster of much smaller parishes of isolated farms and hamlets, and included Cranham, North Ockendon and Upminster, of which Corbets Tey was part, and Rainham, a little port on higher land above the marshes where the Ingrebourne River meets the Thames. Topography has naturally dictated most administrative boundaries and the pattern and chronology of settlements - from the grazing lands of Rainham marshes and the alluvial Thames floodplains, to the siting of the royal palace at Havering atte Bower on the high northern ridge; and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the location of the RAF airfield at Hornchurch.

1.3 For most of its history, the villages and manors of Havering were part of the agricultural life of Essex, with many manor houses set within parkland. From the later 17<sup>th</sup> century and through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area gained popularity as a rural retreat for merchants from the east end of London, who often became active benefactors, their manorial role extending – as with the Benyon family at Cranham and North Ockendon – to the funding of new churches and schools. Trade focused on Romford and Hornchurch, important towns on the road to London, and on Rainham, transporting local produce and passengers to London and the continent along the Thames.

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<sup>1</sup> Cherry, O'Brien, Pevsner: *The Buildings of England: London 5: East* (Penguin, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> A parish is understood to mean the smallest administrative unit in a system of local government, having its own church.

1.4 Development of Havering in the 19<sup>th</sup> century followed the broad pattern of most outer London boroughs, particularly those to the north and east of London, which absorbed expansion from the crowded east end of London. The establishment by a Shoreditch parish of the Cottage Homes for destitute children and orphans at Hornchurch, now St Leonards Conservation Area, is a reminder of the acute problem of poverty and poor living conditions in the east end in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the contrast with then-rural villages such as Hornchurch. The extension of the railway network during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century initiated suburban development around station locations, both in established centres, or at new locations such as Gidea Park. Gidea Park was a late example of the local landowner as entrepreneur; the social ideals of the garden city and late Arts & Crafts movement combining with shrewd land investment to establish a discrete high quality suburb. But it was only in the 1930s, with the combined circumstances of the sale of most of the large estates, new arterial roads, the Underground, low interest rates, cheap buildings material (and the opportunism of building societies in encouraging a desire for the light and air of rural suburbia), that speculative development flooded into the spaces between settlements. This blurring of the boundaries between village and countryside was only halted by Green Belt legislation in the 1930s and the post-war planning acts.

#### 1.5 **Background to the conservation area appraisal**

##### *Conservation areas*

Conservation areas are areas of ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’<sup>3</sup> and were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Designation imposes a duty on the Council, in exercising its planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area<sup>4</sup>. In fulfilling this duty, the Council does not seek to stop all development, but to manage change in a sensitive way, to ensure that those qualities which warranted designation are sustained and reinforced, rather than eroded. Designation also imposes a duty on the Council to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas and to consult the local community about these proposals.<sup>5</sup> These duties have been emphasised by BV 219 (see below).

1.6 Conservation area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, the display of advertisements, and the lopping or felling of trees with a trunk diameter of more than 7.5cm.<sup>6</sup> It does not, however, control all forms of development. Some changes to family dwelling houses (known as ‘permitted development’) do not normally require planning permission. These include minor alterations such as the replacement of windows and doors or the alteration of boundary walls. Where such changes would erode the character and appearance of the area, the Council can introduce special controls, known as Article 4(2) directions. The result is that

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<sup>3</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 section 69

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, section 72

<sup>5</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, section 71

<sup>6</sup> More details of the effects of conservation area designation and property owners’ obligations can be found on the Havering Council website, [www.havering.gov.uk/planning](http://www.havering.gov.uk/planning)

some or all permitted development rights are withdrawn and planning permission is required for such alterations.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.7 *Character appraisals*

A conservation area character appraisal aims to define the qualities that make an area special. This involves understanding the history and development of the place and analysing its current appearance and character - including describing significant features in the landscape and identifying important buildings and spaces and visible archaeological evidence. It also involves recording, where appropriate, intangible qualities such as the sights, sounds and smells that contribute to making the area distinctive, as well as its historic associations with people and events. An appraisal is not a complete audit of every building or feature, but rather aims to give an overall impression of the area. It provides a benchmark of understanding against which the effects of proposals for change can be assessed, and the future of the area managed. It also identifies problems that detract from the character of the area and potential threats to this character, and makes recommendations for action needed to address these issues.

1.8 The present programme of conservation area character appraisals, of which this forms part, supports Havering Council's commitment in its Unitary Development Plan policy ENV 3 to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of its conservation areas. The assessment in the character appraisals of the contribution made by unlisted buildings to the character of the Conservation Area is based on the criteria suggested in the appendix of the English Heritage *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (February 2006), reproduced in Appendix A to this document.

### 1.9 *Best Value Performance Indicator BV 219*

A local authority's performance in defining and recording the special architectural or historic interest of its conservation areas through up-to-date character appraisals is currently monitored through a culture-related Best Value Performance Indicator (BV 219). This measures annually, based on the total number of the authority's designated conservation areas, the percentage with up-to-date character appraisals.

## **2.0 Planning Policy Framework**

### **2.1 National planning policy framework**

The legal basis for conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* and PPG 16 *Archaeology and Planning*.

### **2.2 Regional policy**

Havering's planning policies operate within the broad framework of the London Plan (published in February 2004 and now amended), prepared by the Mayor of London. The London Plan also includes Sub-Regional Development Frameworks for all areas of London, as an intermediate step between the London Plan and the boroughs' Local

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<sup>7</sup> Where applicable, listed building consent may still be required even if works benefit from being permitted development.

Development Frameworks. Havering is within the East London Sub-Regional Development Framework.

### 2.3 Conservation policy and guidance in Havering

#### *Unitary Development Plan policies*

Havering's current policy framework is provided by the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 1993. The UDP is the development plan for the borough and serves two purposes: to bring forward proposals for the development and use of land in the borough, and to set out the Council's policies for making decisions on planning applications. UDP policies can be read on the Council's website. The UDP policy on conservation areas, ENV 3, explains how the Council will implement planning legislation and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of its conservation areas. The UDP also contains a specific policy, ENV 23, for the Gidea Park Conservation Area. The UDP will be replaced in due course by the new Local Development Framework (LDF), explained below.

### 2.4 Existing supplementary planning guidance

To assist residents and developers, the Council has also issued design guidance, which remains a material consideration when planning applications are being assessed until replaced in new Supplementary Planning Documents (see below). Gidea Park has its own design guide to assist in the detailed interpretation of Policy ENV 23, Article 4(2) directions, and the Gidea Park Special Character Area. There is a Shopfront Design Guide for the Rainham Conservation Area, whose principles are applicable in other conservation areas.

### 2.5 Environmental Strategies

Within the UDP policy framework, the Council approved in September 1993 a Heritage Strategy for the Borough. In April 2000, a more detailed Heritage Strategy for Romford and Hornchurch was agreed, which is due to be incorporated in the proposed Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document on heritage by December 2007. These strategies emphasise that heritage conservation, which was once limited to listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas, now extends to all aspects of the environment which contribute to a sense of place and a sense of history and are of lasting value to the community. In July 2005, the Council approved the Romford Urban Strategy to provide the key partners in central Romford with an economic and physical vision for the future. This was adopted as Interim Planning Guidance in June 2006 pending the planned adoption of the Romford Area Action Plan in December 2008. This and the Hornchurch Urban Strategy will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents within the Local Development Framework.

### 2.6 Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the current UDP in due course. The LDF will consist of a portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDD), which collectively will guide development in the borough up to 2020. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) will expand policies set out in the Development Plan Documents (DPD) and the Council intends in due course to prepare a SPD for heritage issues, including local heritage. This will be supported by the adopted and published conservation area character appraisals and related management proposals.

## 2.7 Conservation areas in Havering

There are nine conservation areas in Havering, representing a variety of survivals from different periods of its past. Although all are distinctly individual in character, some share common characteristics because of their location or origins. The southern group of Corbets Tey, Rainham, Cranham and North Ockendon, for example, share medieval administrative origins in the Chafford Hundred, and three of them also maintain their strong focus on the parish church; some retain their manor or manorial farm, which reinforces the surviving village character, even when the modern settlement is partially engulfed by suburbia, or closely pressed by industrial development. Havering atte Bower in the north of the borough also strongly retains this impression, with all the above components present. St Leonards, RAF Hornchurch, and Gidea Park, although totally different from each other, are all survivals of single historical periods and their particular ideas and architectural style. Romford, although originating with its parish church, today represents the evolution of the shopping function - from market to parade to arcade to modern mall - which defines its special interest as much as its medieval core.

## 3.0 Summary of special interest of Romford Conservation area

### 3.1 Designation of the conservation area

Romford Conservation Area was one of the first conservation areas in the borough to be designated, with Rainham and Cranham, in April 1968. There have been no changes to the boundary. A copy of the committee report of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1968 is attached as *Appendix B*. An earlier report in October 1967 set out the reasons for designation. Romford Conservation Area includes the Market Place, High Street, North Street and part of South Street; apart from the Church of St Edward the Confessor, and the buildings on its south west side along the east side of North Street, only the frontages of properties in these streets are included. It is clear from the report that the main purpose of designation was to protect the group of historic buildings at the west end of the Market Place: St Edward's Church, Church House, No 7 Market Place, Lloyds Bank, The Lamb Inn and the Golden Lion Inn. The visual impact of the group is seen as extending *"about 660ft down South Street"*, and *"Although composed of buildings of widely differing styles, the group is unified by its domestic scale and its relationship to and enclosure of the west end of the Market Place."*

3.2 The reason for extending the Conservation Area to adjoining streets was to protect the setting of the principal group, rather than for any intrinsic value of the buildings in, or townscape of, these streets. The report also stated that no new buildings higher than 40 feet should be allowed without very careful consideration within a radius of 600 feet from the town's crossroads. The special interest of the Conservation Area was therefore originally defined as *'a group of old buildings at the western end of the Market Place and the site of an ancient crossroads at the junction of North Street, South Street, High Street and Market Place'* (ie St Edward's Church, Church House, No, 7 Market Place, Lloyds Bank, The Lamb Inn and The Golden Lion Inn).

3.3 Romford is potentially very significant in archaeological terms, because of its Roman and medieval importance; chance finds indicate the Roman settlement may have been to the north east of the present centre. Romford is therefore within the area designated as of archaeological interest on the Borough's 1992 Archaeological Constraints Map, and is proposed as an Archaeological Priority Area (ie a site of known archaeological

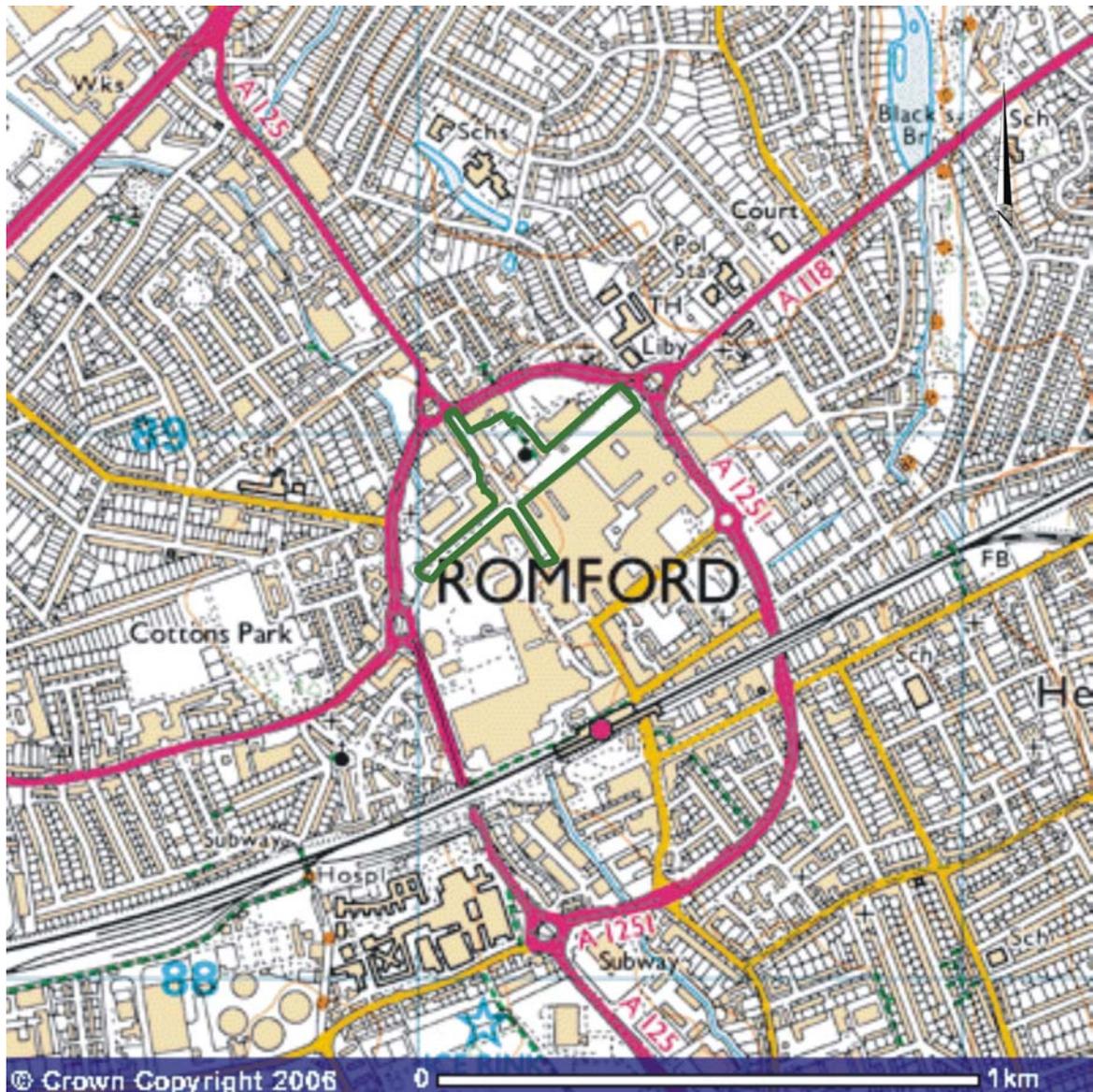
importance) in the revised archaeology map for the borough, due to be included in the forthcoming Local Development Framework.

- 3.4 The listed buildings included in the Conservation Area are: the Parish Church of St Edward the Confessor, at grade II\*; and at grade II, No.5 Market Place (The Lamb public house), No. 15 Market Place (Church House), and The Golden Lion public house. The churchyard of St Edward the Confessor is included in the London Parks & Gardens Trust's *London Inventory of Historic Green Spaces* for Havering as an open space with public access. Buildings of local historical and/or architectural interest in the Conservation Area are:
- The Woolpack Inn High Street
  - Prudential Building, High Street
  - Romford Brewery, High Street
  - The White Hart, High Street
  - Savers, Market Place
  - The Bull, Market Place
  - Rumford Shopping Arcade, Market Place
  - Wedding Gallery, 37-39 North Street
  - Lloyds Bank, North Street
  - Co-op Bank, South Street
  - Quadrant Arcade, South Street/Market Place

### 3.5 **Additional qualities identified**

The principal special interest continues to be as originally defined; the existence of a group of high quality historic buildings at the western end of the Market Place, some of which are listed, which focus on the parish church. However, the following aspects of special interest may be added, in the light of changing attitudes to the value of later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings and the importance of economic and cultural values.

- o The Conservation Area provides a representation of the evolution of shopping provision, originating with the historic market, which has always been central to the economic and social life of the town. Rumford Shopping Arcade from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century represents enhanced shopping activity as a result of the arrival of the railway. Quadrant Arcade signifies the development in the 1930s of new shopping facilities to attract the new residents occupying the area as the result of speculative development between the wars. It retains architectural features characteristic of its time. High Street also has the remains of mediaeval burgage plots, and examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> century shopping development, as well as representative arcades from the 1960s, that are important to the character of the Conservation Area.
- o The buildings of the brewery, and the adjacent public house, represent a period of industrial development integral to the economy of the town at that time.



*Romford conservation area character appraisal map 1: Location map*

Conservation area boundary

#### 4.0 Assessment of special interest

##### 4.1 Location and context

Romford, a market town since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is the largest town in the borough, and its commercial centre. Its ring road, seen on any Ordnance Survey map, reads as a rough oval drawn to mark the position of the medieval crossroads formed by the Market Place, High Street, North Street and South Street, on which the Conservation Area is focused (see Map 1). The ring road physically and visually cuts off the centre of Romford from its

immediate suburban setting, and this is emphasised from some viewpoints by the tall buildings on its perimeter.

#### 4.2 **General character**

The cross of streets which forms the Conservation Area is located towards the northern end of this enclosure. The extent and local importance of the market is such that activity and character change radically on market days, and an otherwise relatively negative and diffuse urban space suddenly acquires logic and relevance. On non-market days, shopping emphasis is on the adjoining streets and the malls which lie behind them, and the town centre again relies on its key landmarks - the group around the church, the banks and public houses - to provide its historic identity.

#### 4.3 **Landscape setting, topography and archaeological potential**

Romford is about 30 metres above sea-level on the upper edge of the gravel terraces that rise from the Thames. The River Rom, which is now mostly culverted, flows south through Romford towards the Thames. The town centre and the Conservation Area are level throughout. The entire Romford Conservation Area is an Archaeological Priority Area and the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service must be consulted about all applications within it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Further information can be obtained from the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service at English Heritage.



Map 2: Historical development

#### 4.4 Origins and historic development

Romford developed as a town in the Middle Ages, but there is a tradition that the Roman staging post of Durolitum was located on the London to Colchester road (now the A12), near what is now Romford. There is evidence of Roman occupation including some scattered finds to the north of the town, and on Marshalls Park and the Dolphin site. An early settlement focused along this road received permission to hold a market in 1247, and a chapel was built on the north side of the market in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century (it was rebuilt in 1850), when the focus of the town shifted away from Old Church, an area liable to flood. Agricultural estates and manor houses surrounded the town, but were mostly consumed by suburban development as they were sold in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The railway, which arrived in Romford in 1839, had the same effect as in most outer London boroughs, turning market towns into commuter towns and villages into suburbs. Commercial and industrial expansion included the Ind Coope Brewery in High Street. Romford's decline as a market town culminated with the closure of the cattle market in 1958. The town centre plan of 1965-70 established the ring road and began in earnest the re-development of the centre - the quadrants south of Market Place and the crossroads - as a loose association of shopping precincts, although this process had modest beginnings back in 1935, when the state-of-the-art covered mall at Quadrant Arcade opened and South Street was widened.

#### 4.5 Spatial analysis



The Market Place is the dominant space in the Conservation Area; its width and openness on non-market days (and its intense activity on market days) dwarf the neighbouring streets. The buildings at the four corners of the junction of Market Place, High Street, South Street and North Street are all of townscape interest in having either

historic character – the Golden Lion – or some degree of good proportion, architectural detail and civic significance in the case of the other three, all built as banks, although one is now in retail use. On non-market days, the scale of Market Place – especially its width - acts against its townscape value, since the buildings surrounding it are relatively small scale and the space is dominated by parked and moving traffic. On non-market days, its role is principally as a car park. In earlier times, the street was clearly delineated, with a division between roadway and wide setted pavements. Closure as a vehicular through-route in the late 1960s benefited the shopping environment, and provided opportunities for more dynamic uses such as special events, but the resultant space is somewhat ambiguous in form and function.

4.6 The eastern end of Market Place is now closed by the new ‘market hall’ style building, which re-instates the pre-existing enclosure and the historic route to Main Road, but its rather contrived façade makes only a limited contribution. The western end of the Market Place forms a more satisfying space, with the group of historic buildings and mature trees around the church providing the original justification for the Conservation Area and the continuing heart of the town centre. The other three streets are mainly pedestrianised. Their effect is as spokes to the hub of the crossroads, with views outwards indeterminate other than in High Street, where the view westwards still has a pleasant terminal semi-enclosure at the soon-to-be-demolished former public house, the Woolpack.

4.7 Spatially, High Street is experienced as a continuation of Market Place, but is narrower. South Street and North Street have a similar relationship, with South Street a broad pedestrian avenue and the main route from the rail station, with larger and blockier buildings. But the tall new ‘Rubicon’ block at the west side of North Street forms an uneasy alliance with the modest scale of the rest of the street and the pedestrian area around it is indeterminate, with no clear role, despite the invaluable focus provided by the mature trees. In general, the Conservation Area’s wider setting does not enhance or complement its special character; it has tall buildings, open development sites, groups of poor mid 20<sup>th</sup> century blocks, and bland new mall structures as backdrop.

#### 4.8 **Character analysis**

##### *Uses*

*“Shopping is very big in Romford. If it was an Olympic event, Romford would win the Gold.” (Local resident quoted in ‘Remembering Romford’, by Brian Evans)<sup>9</sup>*

The Conservation Area is too small to allow for division into sub-areas, given that High Street, North Street and South Street were only included to protect the setting of the west end of Market Place. The use of the area is, and always has been, almost entirely for shopping and associated commercial activity, such as banking, with the exception of the former Ind Coope Brewery fronting onto High Street.

4.9 Until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shops were confined to Market Place and High Street. Stone’s department store (subsequently taken over and re-built by Debenhams) dominated the south side of Market Place. South Street acquired a lengthy parade of shops in 1905 and Romford Arcade in the 1930s; Quadrant Arcade opened in 1935.

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<sup>9</sup> Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 2005

From the 1960s, and with the construction of the earlier version of the Liberty mall in the 1970s, retail ambitions accelerated, so that the four streets are now backed by The Quadrant Arcade (1935), the Rumford Shopping Hall (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), The Brewery (2001) and the Liberty and The Mall (2004). The desire to provide a better shopping environment led to the closure of Market Place to through traffic in 1969.



Map 3: Townscape analysis

## Architectural and historic qualities and their contribution to the special interest of the area

### 4.10 *The Market Place*

The listed buildings at the west end (with the associated block on the east side of North Street and the listed Golden Lion on the North Street/High Street corner) are the only buildings to have their whole depth included in the designated area. The Parish Church of St Edward the Confessor is listed at grade II\* and was built in 1849 replacing an early 15<sup>th</sup> century chapel. A large and ambitious church in ragstone, it was described by Pevsner in 1952 (quoted in the current edition) as “*fussy enough to impress*”. Its value to the Conservation Area now is to provide a reminder of Romford’s modest market-town origins before it became a major shopping centre.



*The contrasting west and east ends of the Market Place*

The trees and the adjoining 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century Church House form an attractive enclosed group. The Lamb, a listed early 19<sup>th</sup> century public house tucked in the western corner, continues the sense of relatively intimate enclosure at this end, being just near enough to be visually related to the church group; it has Lloyds TSB’s building as a book-end.

- 4.11 Of a relatively modest scale, most of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the Market Place are a mix of bland frontages alongside Edwardian facades (Rumford Shopping Hall and Nos. 9-13, a former bank), and 1930s buildings (The Bull, and Quadrant Arcade), which acquire visual and historic interest by contrast with their 1960s and 70s neighbours. Of these, the store at Nos. 56-72 is the most domineering, because of its monotonous length and blank façade. Quadrant Arcade is historically interesting for its 1930s ‘moderne’ detailing and still retains some original doors inside. Its ‘race-track’ roof-light is reminiscent of the famous Derry & Toms Rainbow Room and the distinctive clock has survived intact at the Market Place entrance. The arcade has cultural significance in reflecting the surge of residential development in the 1930s. This instigated and supported the early expansion of Romford as a shopping centre, just as the former Stone’s department store reflected Edwardian prosperity following the coming of the suburban railways.

### 4.12 *The crossroads*

Although Lloyds TSB, in ‘bankers Georgian’ style, is unlisted, it relates well to nearby listed buildings in the Market Place, and acquires credibility through its role in the crossroads townscape, enabling it to stand up to the larger and less well-advised mid

20<sup>th</sup> century blocks on adjoining streets. The Golden Lion, a listed coaching inn of 17<sup>th</sup> century origin on a 12<sup>th</sup> century site with lower ranges along North Street, turns the corner well. Visually and historically, it is the most important building seen from the rest of the Conservation Area. The two remaining buildings – one a former bank, the other built as National Provincial and now the Co-operative Bank – are both good corner landmarks, with some stone detailing at window surrounds and plaques to catch the eye.



*Landmarks at the crossroads (clockwise from top left): Lloyds TSB, The Golden Lion, the townscape of the crossroads seen from South Street, and the Co-op Bank.*

#### 4.13 High Street

This is a pleasant street with a good sense of enclosure; it is dominated by the restored former Ind Coope brewery buildings in stock brick, which despite some flat-roofed modern fifth floor additions, retain their character and much of their detail. To the east, The Bitter End public house is a large and robustly designed late Victorian structure, retaining most of its original fenestration, including the impressive linked first floor oriel windows; to the west, a group of five red brick three storey buildings with shops provides a rare surviving example in the Conservation Area of modest well-detailed late 19<sup>th</sup>

century commercial development. This group is rather spoiled by some unsympathetic street furniture outside.

- 4.14 The group is complemented by the former Woolpack public house, now boarded up and awaiting re-development; this encloses the end of the street and reinforces the unexpected intimacy of the streetscape. Although the north side of the street was re-developed in the 1970s, the concrete-framed colonnade at street level and good street trees manage to complement the solid Victorian character on the south side so that the overall effect is positive.



*The Bitter End public house (formerly The White Hart), the former brewery, and the south west end of High Street*

4.15 *North Street*

The southern part of the street is dominated by the Golden Lion and its rear ranges, a part of which has been reduced to first floor level following a fire; this anomaly detracts from the street scene. The east side of the street presents a series of unremarkable 1930s shop groups, but the traditional scale of the townscape is broken apart by the eight storey Rubicon, around which the open pedestrian spaces appear without purpose. To some extent, good street trees help to redeem the situation. Nos. 31-39, 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings with ground floor shops (*see photo below*), could be attractive if restored, despite being sandwiched between mundane 1930s brick balconied flats and a ramp; but poor quality frontages and continuing dereliction have taken their toll and consent for demolition and re-development has now been granted on appeal.



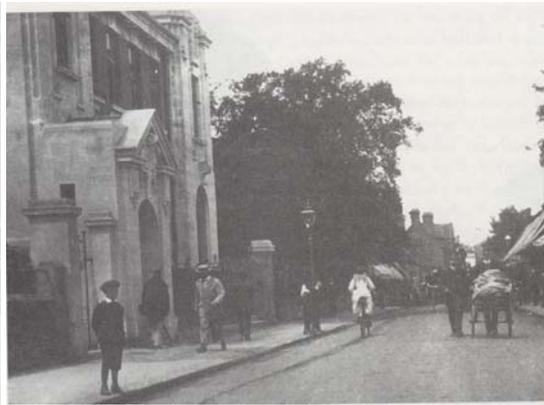
View north along North Street, and Nos. 31-39

#### 4.16 South Street



General view of South Street; and the unusual first floor treatment to Nos. 22-24.

This is the principal and busiest shopping street in the town, widened in the 1930s. It has little architectural distinction, the majority of buildings being commercial and retail development of the 1960s onwards. The best building is the stone façade to the southern arm of Quadrant Arcade; confident swooping lines, a bold central bay with balcony, and incised lettering in a square 30s lettering style. Otherwise, the only remnants of interest are outside the Conservation Area; the former Post Office (see photos below), its ground floor replaced, but retaining decorative stonework above with 'GR' logos, and at Nos. 16-24 (even) a three storey red-brick Edwardian group of five bays of shops, with plain sashes and pediments, of which the left-hand pair possesses an exuberant later Odeon-style first floor treatment (see photo at page 22 and above).



South Street Post Office, now and then

4.17 *Contribution made by key unlisted buildings*

In most town centres which thrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the key surviving unlisted buildings are usually commercial landmarks such as banks and public houses or hotels; buildings providing a public service, such as the post office, the library, and the station; and industrial buildings and large scale retail emporia. These were often well built and expensively detailed – particularly the banks and public houses. In Romford, the central focus of the Conservation Area at the crossroads is dominated by three buildings constructed as banks. The Co-operative (formerly National Provincial) Bank is the best of these. The Market Place and South Street retain the impressive entrance façades to Quadrant Arcade.



Detail at the Co-op Bank (built as National Provincial) and the Bitter End PH, High Street



Nos. 25-35 High Street



Entrance to Quadrant Arcade, Market Place

4.18 The former brewery buildings dominate High Street, their stock brick contrasting with the more prevalent red brick, and the adjoining public house, The Bitter End (formerly the Old White Hart Inn), is a landmark in its own right, with its distinctive first floor windows (the upper floors worryingly appear unused). Further along High Street, the group at Nos. 25-35 retains a strong Edwardian character and some good terracotta detailing, and the liveliness of small traditional shops. All these, with The Woolpack, form a lively and good quality Victorian enclave within the Conservation Area.

4.19 *Local details and materials, and the public realm*

There is no predominant local material. 19<sup>th</sup> century building is in both stock and dark red brick, with commercial buildings employing freestone for cladding and decorative work. Recent paving in Market Place has used a variety of traditional materials to good effect, although this does not mitigate the dominance of car parking and the random circulation routes. Street signage and furniture, including cylindrical advertising columns in 'heritage' and modern designs, is sometimes insensitive, as noted at the west end of High Street. Brick planters in North Street are neglected and in poor condition (see *photo in paragraph 4.20*).

4.20 *Greenery and green spaces*



The central area of Romford lacks green space or park areas, intensifying the sense of a highly concentrated urban area within the stricture of the ring road. However, the trees – especially the mature specimens - within the Conservation Area are all the more valuable for this reason, and in a number of locations are critical to the character. Those in front of the parish church and in North Street and High Street have been noted; the Market Place also benefits from its planting and, in some cases, groups of trees are valuable in screening unfortunate backdrop buildings, as in the view down Market Link behind the church group (above, left) and in North Street (above, right).

4.21 *Negative factors: loss, intrusion and damage.*

The Conservation Area today consists of a group of attractive listed buildings with a setting of mainly mediocre buildings, enlivened by occasional groups of late 19<sup>th</sup> century or 1930s commercial and retail development, but with a backdrop of shopping development which ignores the traditional infrastructure of the town. This may, in the early days after designation, have been due to the perception that the focal group was the only locus worth protecting. This is implicit in the restriction of protection to building

frontages for most of the area. Some of the most intrusive buildings may already have been in existence before designation, but the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has not been kind to the Romford Conservation Area, nor has it successfully capitalised on its heritage resource.

- 4.22 Unfortunately, many of the key issues, such as the negative effect of the Ring Road, do not appear capable of being addressed through design guidance or Supplementary Planning Documents, although the Romford Urban Strategy has recognised the townscape problems of scale and unsympathetic character that the Ring Road has generated, and made proposals to address these issues.



*Modern development provides an inappropriate setting for the Conservation Area*

4.23 *Area condition and buildings at risk*

There is evidence that the shopping streets other than South Street (which contains those multiples not located in The Liberty or Brewery malls) have not had informed investment in their building fabric or in the public realm sufficient to maintain character and appearance. This manifests itself, for example, as neglected upper storeys, poorly designed and low quality fascias and shop-fronts, and unattractive hard surfacing and planters. Some sites (for example, the north side of Market Place and North Street) await redevelopment, and their neglected condition detracts from the street scene and general appearance of the Conservation Area.



*Negative elements in North Street: a good building suffering from insensitive alterations and neglect, and an abandoned planter*

#### 4.24 Problems and pressures

The following points pick up on the main issues in the character appraisal, and summarise the current problems.

- The current Conservation Area boundary lacks integrity, because, for much of its extent, only the frontages of buildings are included. This may have encouraged development unsympathetic to traditional street and plot patterns and building scales.
- Some buildings of character in South Street are excluded from the Conservation Area because they did not fall within the 'viewing area' for the listed buildings at designation
- Many infill sites in the Conservation Area – some from before designation - have unsympathetic buildings in inappropriate designs and materials, with blank façades to the street
- Buildings of good or reasonable quality have had architectural details destroyed, or poor shop-fronts added.
- Development immediately outside the Conservation Area (in the quadrants, and along the ring road) has produced an unsympathetic backdrop to the historic townscape in the centre; conversely, from the Ring Road, there is no perception that a historic centre hides behind the large buildings along the route.
- New buildings, such as the eastern 'closure' to the Market, have failed to enhance the townscape of the town centre
- The removal of through traffic from Market Place has left a significant space with no coherent structure and over-dominant car-parking
- Buildings in High Street and North Street which could have made a positive contribution through repair and improvement are being lost to disrepair or re-development.



*The former GPO and Nos. 54-62 South Street – buildings which could be improved and make a contribution to the town centre – they should be included in the Conservation Area*

#### 5.0 Suggested boundary changes

- 5.1 The Conservation Area boundary should be drawn in a more holistic way, as identified in the Romford Heritage Strategy (2000), to include the entirety of all frontage buildings. It

is no longer appropriate for the Conservation Area boundary to separate façades from the buildings to which they belong. The present boundary resulted from a now-outdated approach to designation in 1967/68, which sought to protect a key 'conservation group' (as it was described in the 1967 report) by recognising its value and designating a setting area, ('conservation area'), rather than recognising such an area as a coherent whole, with its own architectural and historic interest. While it is still necessary to protect the key group, it would be preferable to do so by including the whole of all the frontage buildings to the Market Place and adjoining streets, which would also have the merit of recognising the quality of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, such as Quadrant Arcade and the group at the south west end of High Street.

- 5.2 A suggested revised boundary is shown on *Map 4* on Page 26. Defining the boundary cannot be an exact science, because of the extent of modern building. It would be simpler to draw a new boundary including additionally only buildings which make a positive contribution to the area's character, but this would produce a very complicated boundary and leave out of the equation the potential for improvement when neutral or negative sites come up for redevelopment. A more widely-drawn boundary, such as is proposed now, could stress the need to retain a range of different periods of buildings to represent Romford's shopping history, even if they are not remarkable examples of their time; including the relatively modest 1920s and 30s groups on North Street and South Street, which could be improved by better treatment.



## 6.0 Summary of issues

- There is a need for a more holistic and cohesive conservation area boundary
- There is a need for co-ordinated and site-specific design guidance for the Market Place, to discourage blank façades and pastiche buildings; also for any other good groups, for example, in High Street at the west end.
- There is a need - and the potential - to create a better sense of place in Market Place on non-market days
- Enhancement of both Quadrant Arcade frontages and interior to retain (or reinstate) and emphasise 1930s features should be considered, either as part of design guidance, or as a separate, pro-active enhancement scheme
- There is a need to retain a range of buildings of different periods to represent Romford's development.

## 7.0 Contact details

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## Management proposals

### 8.0 Introduction and background

- 8.1 The management proposals for Havering's conservation areas are based on the character appraisals and provide detailed strategies for the positive management of change within these areas, in order to preserve and enhance their distinctive character. The proposals aim to *preserve* each conservation area's positive characteristics by the detailed application of planning policies and the implementation of some new controls; and to *enhance* the character of each area by encouraging the improvement or re-development of sites which detract from its character.
- 8.2 English Heritage's revised guidance on conservation area management (February 2006) states in paragraph 5.1 that "The character appraisal should provide the basis for developing management proposals for the conservation area that will fulfil the general duty placed upon local authorities under the Act, now formalised in BV219c, to draw up and publish such proposals. The proposals should take the form of a mid- to long-term strategy setting objectives for addressing the issues and recommendations for action arising from the appraisal, and identifying any further or more detailed work required for their implementation."
- 8.3 The English Heritage guidance also suggests (paragraph 5.2) what issues a management strategy might cover. Relevant issues for Havering's conservation areas appear to be:

- the application of policy guidance, both national and local, and site-specific development briefs
- establishing procedures to ensure consistent decision-making
- establishing a mechanism for monitoring change in the area on a regular basis;
- a rapid-response enforcement strategy to address unauthorised development
- proposals for Article 4(2) directions, following detailed survey and justification, which will restrict permitted development rights by requiring planning consent for specific alterations to residential properties;
- intended action to secure the future of any buildings at risk from damage, vacancy or neglect;
- enhancement schemes and ongoing/improved management regimes for the public realm
- a strategy for the management and protection of important trees, street greenery and green spaces; and
- proposals for an urban design/public realm framework for the area (setting out agreed standards and specifications for footway surfaces, street furniture, signage and traffic management measures).

## **9.0 Management proposals for the Romford Conservation Area**

- 9.1 The character appraisal of the Romford Conservation Area sets out in section 3.0 a list of key characteristics (or ‘positive factors’) which provide the special interest of the conservation area. These are summarised as the ‘Definition of special interest’ of the conservation area. The management strategy sets out the Council’s proposals for protecting these key characteristics. Similarly, the character appraisal examines problems and pressures (or ‘negative factors’) in each character area, summarised at the end of the appraisal as ‘Issues affecting the conservation area’, and the management strategy addresses these with proposals for improved management, enhancement or re-development where appropriate, in consultation with stakeholders.
- 9.2 In the following table of proposals, the first column shows the general categories of proposals; not all conservation areas will generate issues to be addressed in all these categories.

## APPENDIX A

*Criteria for assessing unlisted building in a conservation area*  
[from English Heritage guidance *Conservation area appraisals* (2006)]

When considering the contribution made by unlisted buildings to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, the following questions might be asked:

- Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as a significant wall, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

Any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, provided that its historic form and values have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration.