

WIVENHOE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL 2007

Notes from The Wivenhoe Society

ANALYSIS OF THE AREA

Wivenhoe CA essentially consists of two sub-areas

- (1) The medieval – C16 – C17 core, where most buildings are listed and therefore ‘not at risk’
- (2) The new Victorian streets, mostly 1860s and mostly terraced

Alma St
Hamilton Rd
Station Rd
(Phillip Rd)
Clifton Tce
Anglesea Rd
Paget Rd
Queens Rd
Park Rd & terraces
Rebow Rd

(the latter five representing the Wivenhoe House Estate development of the 1860s).

Additionally, the following older streets now consist mostly or entirely of C19 properties
East side of High St, Queens Rd to Park Hotel
Quay St
Bath St

Most of the properties in these streets are not of course listed (although the enthusiasm of one EH officer in 1982 saw most of Alma St listed), and they are therefore at great risk of losing their character from exterior alterations. It is to be assumed that the boundaries of the CA were drawn up in the belief that these streets were an important part of the character of Wivenhoe, therefore the fact that the medieval core is at lesser risk is not a reason for accepting the visual deterioration of the rest.

Per the current statutory lists there are 91 listed properties within the CA, however if the misdescriptions and incorrect addresses in the statutory lists are corrected, the figure is 108 (see separate paper). Unless another officer with an above-average enthusiasm for 1860s terraced houses were to visit (!), the number of currently unlisted properties that might be considered for listing is very small. An application is currently being considered for the station buildings. 74 High St is another possibility but the pre-C19 construction of this property remains uninvestigated.

All pre-1914 properties below the Park Hotel are within the current CA boundary except for 6-12 Park Rd, 31-45 Park Rd, Pump House Queens Rd, 62-72 Queens Rd, 16/18 and 17/19 Paget Rd, seven houses in Anglesea Rd above the railway, and the former shipyard offices along the west side of Bath St.

There are 46 post-1914 properties within the current CA boundaries (plus the Business Centre off Brook St, and various sheds elsewhere). Many of these are very new especially in

St Johns Rd which no longer has any older properties. Elsewhere the C20 properties are scattered and in many cases semi-hidden.

The Cooks Shipyard development of 80-90 units currently under construction is largely within the CA boundary and will of course wholly alter that part of it.

THREATS TO THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Wivenhoe CA survived remarkably well through the 1970s-90s period (except for the growing replacement windows problem, see below) but is now under threat on a number of fronts, not least from the policies of the local authorities (their *de facto* policies, as distinct from their proclaimed policies!). The massive (in the context of the small area of the historic core) Wivenhoe Port and Cooks Shipyard developments will leave the old section of riverside Wivenhoe as a small core squeezed by developers' housing, and are generating increased traffic levels on the formerly very quiet and pedestrian-dominated historic core streets. This will apply particularly to the Cooks Shipyard development which was encouraged by CBC despite the complete absence of any suitable road access.

Owing to **the absence of any Article 4 Direction**, the Conservation Area status has to date had very little practical impact, and a large number of the unlisted buildings have been affected by the replacement of windows, doors, roofing materials, etc in recent years. The principal visual impact is that from replacement uPVC windows. To quantify the extent of this a survey was done in February 2005. This showed that of the 375 pre-1914 properties within the CA, some 15 have been wholly spoilt by major exterior alterations including windows, and another 45 have inappropriate replacement windows but are otherwise largely in original exterior condition. [A few cases of replacement uPVC windows of C19-sash type appearance were excluded]. The worst affected streets are Station Rd, Queens Rd, and the Rebow Rd almshouses. Wivenhoe residents are probably more architecturally sensitive than the average inhabitant of C19 terraced housing elsewhere, nevertheless it is clear that if the present rate of spread of inappropriate uPVC windows continues, there will by the mid C21 be no prospect left unspoilt in the C19 streets. **Accordingly the Wivenhoe Society in 2006 requested CBC to investigate the possibility of introducing an Article 4 Direction for the CA.** We understand this has now been included within the remit of the Appraisal. Such a direction should be applied throughout the area, at least in respect of the matter of window alterations on pre-1914 houses. The geographical and subject extent of the Direction otherwise will need to be discussed. Some of the more important properties (e.g. Denton's Terrace, Colne Terrace, Clifton Terrace) might unfortunately be deemed not to front on to a 'highway' and might therefore require an Article 4(1) direction rather than an Article 4(2) direction?.

The actions of **ECC Highways** have become a major problem in the last few years. There appears to be no working consultation between ECC Heritage officers and ECC Highways staff. ('We haven't got on top of Highways' (Heritage); 'Consultation with Heritage has not proved useful' (Highways) !!). There has been a great spread of **road signs** in the CA of late, in conflict with all national policies but justified by Highways on technical 'manual instructions' grounds. As recently as the late 1990s there were only a handful (no record but 2 or 3?) of road signs within the CA, now there are over twenty and another 11 will be erected over the next few weeks. This includes some within the central core streets which were previously devoid of such intrusive signing. In addition there are a fair number of small parking restrictions plates elevated on tall poles, most of which are unnecessary owing to the close proximity of the next one. [It is not clear why these signs have to be on 8ft poles when the identical signs on walls etc are considered acceptable 2ft above ground level].

There are also other threats from Highways which have not yet manifested themselves. We are informed that it is now ECC policy (on technical/'safety' grounds, and no doubt decided by Highways officers without any contribution from the Council at large!!) to ban street lights on the walls of houses. At present the majority of lamps in the historic core area are mounted on house walls, and the consequent lack of lamp posts is a major contribution to the pleasant appearance of the area. It would appear that these would all have to be removed whenever the lighting in Wivenhoe is next renewed, and dozens of standard lamp posts put up

throughout the historic core. Again, most of the other street lights in the CA are on telegraph poles, not on Highways lamp posts. There are those in Wivenhoe who would like to get rid of the telegraph poles on amenity grounds but it would seem that if this were done under present policies it would result in a further three-figure number of standard lamp posts spoiling the CA streets. [The telegraph poles are at least a *C19* visual intrusion!].

It has also been established recently that Highways will no longer permit any superior design of lamp posts but will only permit their standard poles, the only condescension to the CA being that they will paint them black instead of being unpainted. Taylor Woodrow wished to put up better lamp standards in parts of the Cooks development but have been told they cannot. This again is of course contrary to all national good practice/policy guidance.