

A report into the Conservation Area designation potential for The Hamlet Court area of Westcliff-on-Sea

by **Hamlet Court Conservation Forum (HCCF)**

report prepared by Andy Atkinson MSc FRSA Historical Building Consultant

January 2020 (Revision A - April 2020)



1.0 This report is submitted in response to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive's Report to Cabinet of 16th January 2020 in consideration of Hamlet Court Road for conservation area designation (the 'Council Report') and the related report by Purcell (October 2019). The report has been updated as Revision A, April 2020.

2.0 For the purpose of this report Hamlet Court Road (HCR) means the main high street road from the London Road to Westcliff-on-Sea railway station. For clarity the road is identified as '**upper HCR**' from London Road to St Helen's Road and '**lower HCR**' from St Helen's Road to Westcliff Station.

3.0 Conclusion

- **HCCF supports the Conservation Area designation for upper Hamlet Court Road**
- **HCCF has demonstrated through further study and public consultation that the 'Wider Study Area' should be included within the Conservation Area boundary**

4.0 Support for the designation of upper HCR

The Purcell report recommends conservation area designation to **upper HCR** and we fully and warmly support this recommendation. HCCF have been working towards conservation area designation for over 3 years and we believe that there has never been a more important time for this to happen. National figures just released have again shown how difficult trade has been in our high streets and as an historic road, heritage can play its role.

HCR can only receive heritage funding if it is designated as a conservation area. This has been evidenced recently by our application for £1.8m in funding from the Government's High Street Heritage Action Zone programme which failed on the ground of non-designation. The Architectural Heritage Fund have also offered funding opportunities but only on the basis that the area is first designated. It is clear that conservation designation has to happen to access heritage funds.

Whilst we support the protection of our heritage we see conservation area designation as the forerunner to **heritage led regeneration**. This is *not* about nostalgic conservation. We firmly want to see the special identity of Westcliff protected and enhanced.

Please note that throughout this report we have added to but not unnecessarily replicated Purcell's report. We support their report content but as supplemented here.

5.0 The Council's own Character Study

The road was identified in the 'Southend Borough wide Character Study' of 2011 as part of the Local Plan documentation of the time. This stated that 'This [area] would benefit from a greater level of protection to promote preservation and enhancement of the buildings and may merit consideration as a conservation area'. This recognition was important in 2011 and even more important in 2020.

6.0 Regeneration and the Community

It is surprising that the Council Report says nothing about regeneration and appears to be written from a planning perspective only. It does not describe the potential for regeneration offered by conservation area designation, a progressive management plan and involvement of the community. Designation could dramatically help Westcliff and the centre of our town. Regeneration attempts have not worked in the past, perhaps due to the various pressures on local high streets being too great. HCR has continued to struggle, most recently evidenced by the key loss of Havens store.

Currently the Coronavirus crisis has closed many businesses in HCR, as every other high street nationally and internationally. At this time no-one knows how this crisis will affect the longer term future of our high streets but it is almost certain that there will be a new recognition of the importance of local trade and public place. This is where HCR will provide an important resource and place of interaction for the community.

So this is now, more than ever in our entire life-times, a key opportunity for our town, an idea whose time has now come. The current high street failure problem is complex with various contributory factors that have, up until now, received wide public comment. Central Government through its Future High Street Fund, retail professionals Bill Grimsey ([The Grimsey Report 2](#)) and Sir John Timpson ([The High Street Report](#)) and The Institute for Place Management ([High Street 2030: Achieving Change](#)) recognise the importance of heritage and the community in achieving the regeneration of roads such as HCR.

Conservation area designation has to be understood for its wider, inclusive community, town regeneration potential and *not just as a town planning matter.*

7.0 Special Architectural and Historical Interest

Special architectural and historical interest are the main determinants for designation as required by the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

HCR has demonstrable special architectural and historical interest resulting from the history of the area which rapidly expanded following the opening of Westcliff Railway Station in 1895, and the creation of a flourishing retail high street. Today this history survives in the form of exuberant and decorative Edwardian Flourish and later Art Deco architecture. This exuberance shows itself in the very long expanse of revival Romanesque arcading, echoing a link to our main High Street, the wider connection to the London arcades and even international references such as Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan, 20 years before Hamlet Court Road. This is something that would have been aware to Edwardian urban designers. Here there is an identifiable link between the arcade and retail, creating a *retail heritage*. In particular the architecture is largely intact in terms of wall and roof elements with most of the erosion of the fabric limited to degradable elements (such as timberwork, roof finishes) which can be suitably repaired or replaced over time. Shop fronts show the most erosion but again, we consider these elements perfectly replaceable over time.

There are strong arguments for a balanced future management plan and policy that supports both well designed historic shop fronts and well designed modern alternatives, exactly how retail heritage has evolved during the C20.

8.0 'Negative' factors considered

For all the positives that conservation designation can bring (e.g. management plan guidance and assistance, access to heritage funds, repair and reclamation of property over time, a sense of place restored and civic pride in an area) there can be perceived negative factors. One is described in the officers' Council Report, that stricter controls mean higher costs. The following should be considered:

- **Conservation designation is not retrospective** – it cannot require changes and improvements. Yes, it will encourage improvements but there is no obligation on property owners to upgrade their buildings.
- **Like-for-like replacement.** This has been practiced over many years in Southend-on-Sea, as elsewhere. If a property in a designated area has a non-original concrete tile roof or non-original uPVC or aluminium windows there has not been any requirement to reinstate original fabric. In other words, a new modern material can replace an existing modern material. Reinstatement of historically correct fabric (which is usually more expensive) would be encouraged but there is no obligation on property owners to carry this out where it already has a modern substitute, prior to designation.
- **Loss of historic building fabric.** It is often claimed that loss of historic fabric mitigates against designation. But it has to be understood that there are two types of building fabric, degradable and 'permanent' fabric. Timber windows and other features (such as barge boards, balustrades etc.) and roof finishes are the most evident degradable elements and these can all be reinstated, as required. 'Permanent' fabric, such as brickwork and stone, degrade very slowly (especially given that the Edwardian era was only 100 or so years ago) and are mostly intact in the HCR area. But where missing, even 'permanent' fabric can be reinstated.
- **Shop front replacement.** This represents the biggest area of historical erosion in HCR with many poor quality shop fronts and signage. Yet we advocate a balanced management plan where both traditional, wooden shop fronts (typically more expensive) *and* modern, aluminium or stone clad shop fronts may well work, side by side. We simply want these all built to good design standards which does not imply additional costs.
- **Larger projects.** In some areas there has been larger loss of 'permanent' fabric or modern alteration, detracting from the historic significance. 157 Hamlet Court Road is an example of this with a modern frontage replacing the historic frontage. These instances can be helped with heritage funding assistance and are the types of project HCCF or building preservation trusts can assist.

9.0 'Wider Study Area'

The Purcell report calls for further study in a 'Wider Study Area' including **lower HCR**, Preston Road, Ditton Court Road and parts of Canewdon Road and Cossington Road. We do not understand why this has not been looked at and reported upon by the Council during this Local Plan review?

The ideal time for this work is now so we have therefore undertaken this further study and report on this below. The work includes a crucial findings and evidential support with regards to the 'Wider Study Area'.

Indeed, following our research, it can now be said that findings demonstrate the area to be a most important area in the history of Southend-on-Sea.

10.0 Public Consultation

The Council have now undertaken public consultation in March and April 2020 and the results of this are yet to be published.

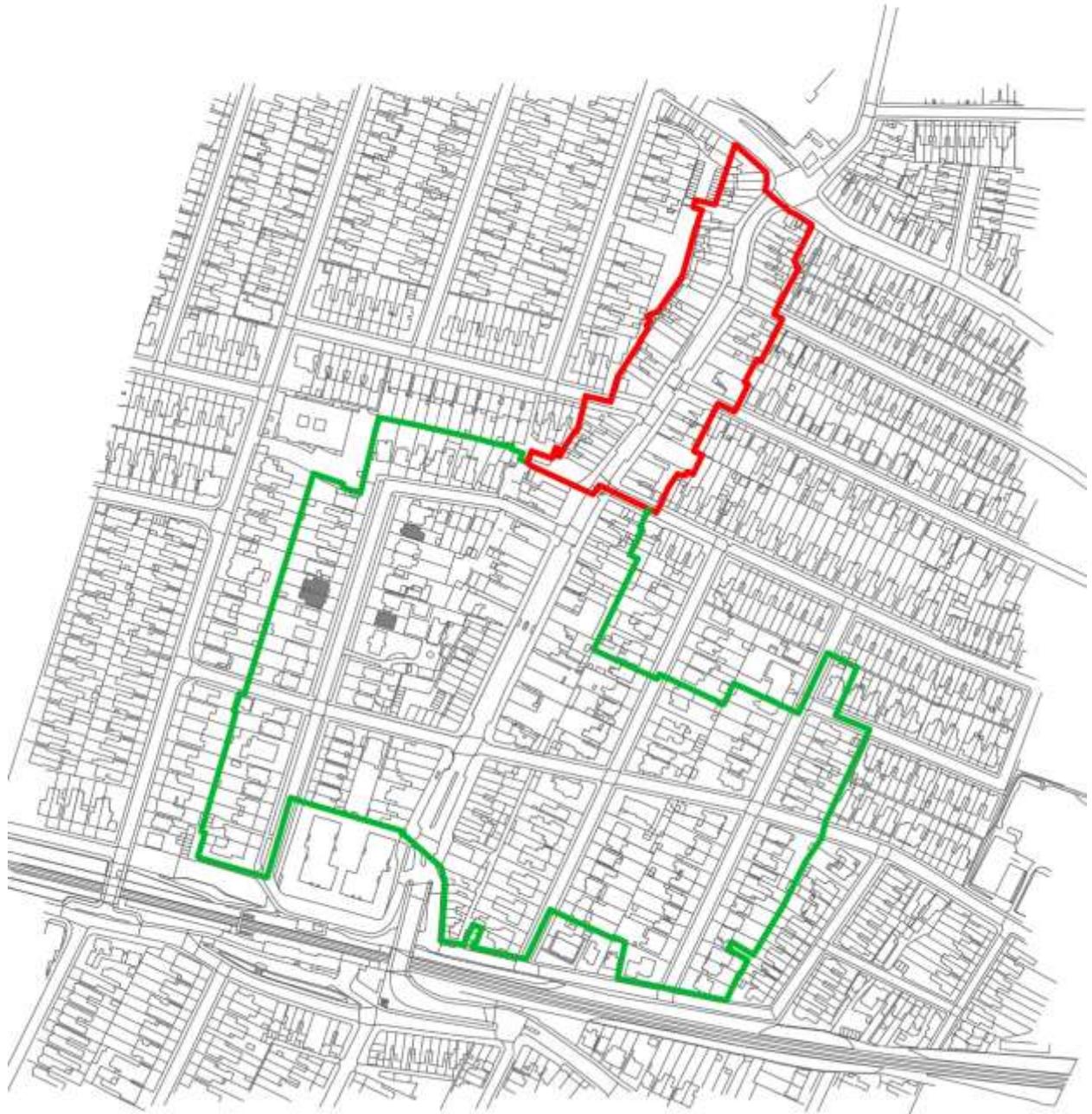
HCCF has also undertaken public consultation and the results are described below.

HCCF ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS AT 6th April 2020
123 people gave responses [Note that the Coronavirus crisis foreshortened the survey, in particular preventing a leaflet drop to all local residents which would have resulted in a higher response level. However, the survey is continuing so that further public opinion can be gathered]
Over 99% of respondents agreed that conservation area designation could help the protection and improvement of the Hamlet Court area [we think one person made an error from filling error which stopped this being 100%]
95% of respondents indicated that the conservation area boundary should include both upper and lower Hamlet Court Road, Ditton Court Road, Preston Road and Cossington Road.
86% of respondents indicated support for wider conservation protection locally, outside of the suggested designation boundary. We pointed out that this might not be through formal designation but it does indicate a desire for local protection that could be assisted through appropriate new Local Plan policies (the Local Plan is being re-written at this time).
The survey invited the ranking of six aspects that could assist local regeneration. Results were, interestingly, quite uniform, 'Improved Environment and streetscape' just slightly ahead of the other described aspects. This tends to suggest a generalised view that a holistic, multifaceted approach to regeneration is required.

This survey showed incredibly high levels of public support for local conservation and conservation of the 'Wider' area. Indeed, since the survey, further study has come to light showing the importance of the wider area in the history of Southend-on-Sea as described later in this report.

As we already identified in Section 6.0 the importance of community involvement is now widely recognised in society. Indeed successful conservation needs the shared engagement of the Community. This is described by both Historic England and the Civic Voice. Good conservation does not happen in isolation as if a red line designation alone can achieve conservation success. This community support is only really achieved with the support of local residents, engaged and committed to their neighbourhood. This is where **upper HCR** (mainly commercial) may need the support of **lower HCR** and the neighbouring roads (mainly residential). This is exactly the case at the comparable Leigh and Leigh Cliff conservation areas, both supporting Leigh Broadway. The support membership profile will be well known Leigh Society. Without this support, designation of **upper HCR** alone runs the risk of sterility and inaction, perhaps leading to further failure. Therefore, the engaged support of the community will benefit designation.

Our further study has demonstrated that designation should include all the roads in the 'Wider Study Area' as well as upper HCR, marked A & B on Figure 1.



 Conservation Area Boundary A

 Conservation Area Boundary B

 Non Original Building

Figure 1: Possible Conservation Area Boundaries

11.0 The wider Special Architectural and Historical Interest

Purcell show the origin of Hamlet Court Road, extending from London Road (formerly Leigh Road) to the railway station and the OS map of 1897 shows the origins as an urbanised street with the station and the first properties built in both **upper and lower HCR** – these were parts of the same development in the road. Crucially, Purcell also and correctly describes the importance of the railway station and the role this played in the development of the Hamlet Court area with its vital link to London. In other words, **upper HCR** developed because of the railway, the station and its position in **lower HCR**. This is clearly evidenced in the cover image to this report where the queuing private and ‘for hire’ horse draw coaches wait beside the purpose built coach house – a clear representation of the relative affluence and railway traffic at the time. *This* is the heritage of the whole of **upper and lower HCR**. Their historical significance is one and the same.

Furthermore, the road actually derives its name from Hamlet Court - located in **lower HCR**. As the road was straightened (see Purcell), giving land to Hamlet Court this property retained importance in the road, being the only remaining original property right up until the late 1930’s, whilst all around it the area became infilled and developed. This is historically significant and is clearly seen today in the style of the later properties occupying this site.

Purcell’s recommended area for designation may contain the area’s most flamboyant and readily observed decorative buildings but the history is just as much evidenced in **lower HCR**.

Lower HCR and the neighbouring streets repeatedly exhibit clear architectural and historical special interest, from the railway station position, relationship to the seafront, the ranges of Edwardian and later buildings, to the good number of individual properties, all echoing the Edwardian, Arts & Crafts and Art Deco styles throughout the area. Purcell describes these buildings as typical of the period and of elsewhere in Southend. We will show in detail in Section 13 where these properties are particular to the Hamlet Court area, indeed unusual in Southend, and underpin the local special interest.

Exceptionally, we will also show how Ditton Court Road has a rare and evident connection to the **Garden City Movement**, unique and important in Southend-on-Sea.

12.0 Equivalent Value Assessment

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area Act) 1990 requires the Council to consider ‘which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. In the first instance this describes how conservation lives and can accommodate both preservation and enhancement. In doing this the Council will need to adopt assessment values that are at least equivalent to those used in the past, to ensure appropriate future designation and to maintain appropriate past designations. No less should happen in the HCR area and it is appropriate that assessment is comparable with Leigh and Leigh Cliff, designated in 1971 and 1981 respectively, almost 50 & 40 years ago. Only these conservation areas in Southend-on-Sea include a commercial high street, exactly the same as HCR. Section 13 will show where the HCR area can be seen to at least meet and in some ways exceed the special interest of Leigh. In other words the designation of the HCR area would add to the heritage profile and quality of our town.

13.0 Character assessment of the lower HCR area

This assessment includes Ditton Court Road, Preston Road and parts of Canewdon Road and Cossington Road. Please refer to the street plan at Figure 1 which suggests a similar boundary to that suggested by Purcell. At this stage our research is not exhaustive and further historical information on all properties will follow.

13.1 Lower HCR

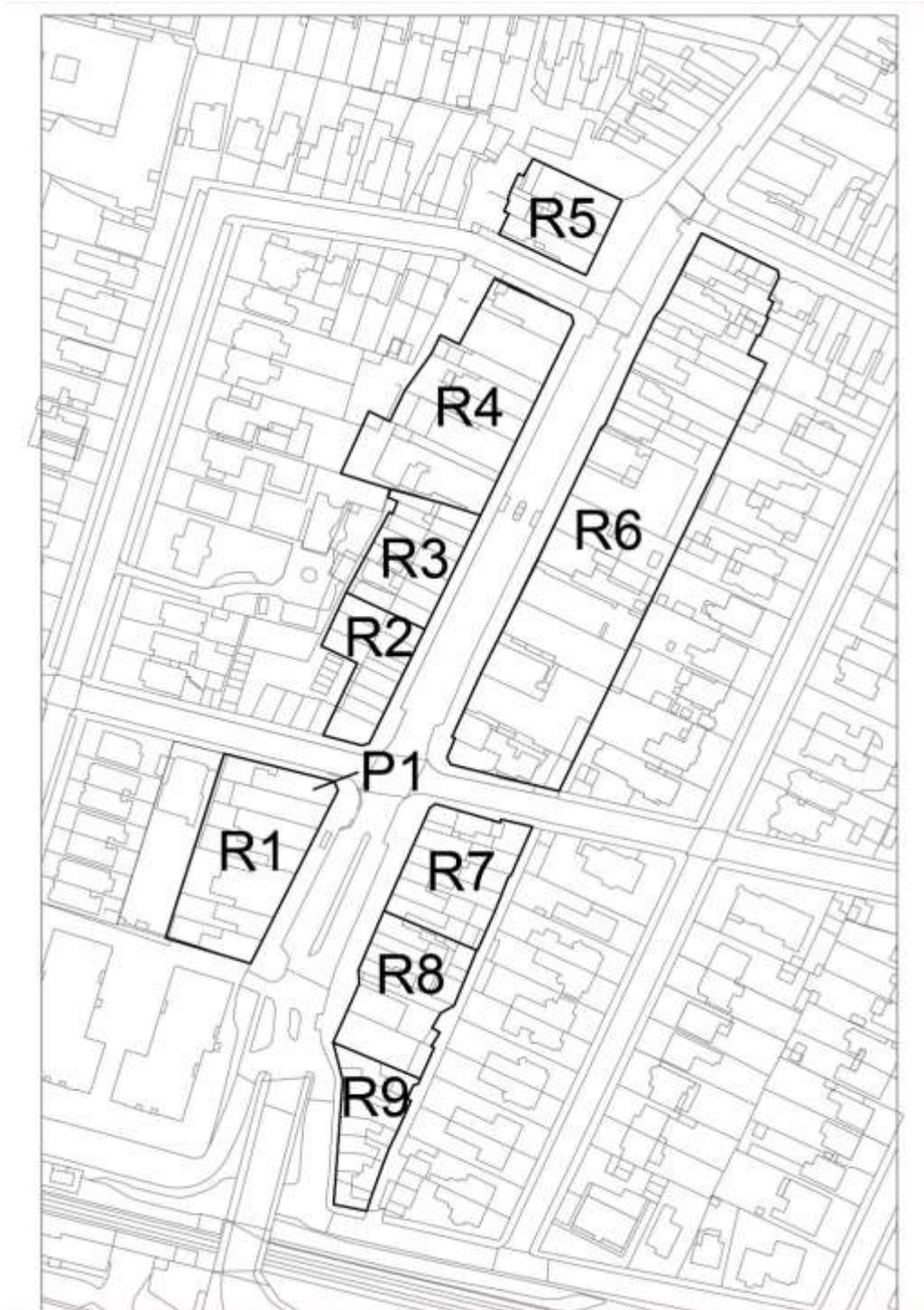


Figure 2: Building Ranges Identified at R1-R9
Property identified at P1

Westcliff railway station was built in 1895 and this was the most significant historical development in the area. This opened the London Tilbury Southend railway to Westcliff and introduced the Brassey family to the area. Thomas Brassey, reputedly the world's greatest railway builder, had been responsible for the LTS railway. He died in 1870 but his sons, Lord Thomas Brassey and Henry Brassey became trustees of large parts of the Hamlet Estate. But the real significance was that Westcliff Station opened up access to London for local businessmen and both HCR as a local high street and numerous large, middle class houses were developed. The area became established and some of Southend's most prominent people lived locally. The photograph on the cover to this document shows horse drawn carriages queuing outside the station, demonstrating the middle class popularity of the area.

It is this station, at the southern end of HCR, which gave rise to the Edwardian development of the local area.

Hamlet House is identified on the 1874 OS map of the area beside a former offset in the north-south running main road. Earlier the Chapman & André map of 1777 also shows a property at this location but a photograph at the Essex Record office records Hamlet House as being built around 1800. By 1897 the OS map records the then straightened Hamlet Court Road with Hamlet House now renamed as 'Hamlet Court' within grounds to the west. Lord Brassey and others owned this property in 1898 and this is significant for what later happened in Ditton Court Road. Hamlet Court became the home to some significant residents including Sir Philip Cunliffe-Owen (1828-1894) Director of the Museum of South Kensington, the poet and journalist Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) most known for his work 'Light of Asia' and the Scottish poet, novelist and dramatist Robert Williams Buchanan (1841-1901) who is buried in St John's churchyard.

Most of the original property ranges in lower HCR survive intact today. One notable exception to this was the Queen's Hotel that stood immediately to the north of the station. This was a huge Edwardian mock Tudor edifice built at the end of the C19, following the railway station. It was nothing less than a huge statement of confidence and expansion in the area. An illustrious history followed right up until the building's demolition in 1989. But the building still forms an important part of the memory of the area today.

The other main building ranges in **lower HCR** are described below:

Range R1 is a fine red brick and stone dressed row of 7 similar three storey Edwardian buildings that notably step down with the fall of the road to the south. This range projects a strong urban identity. Probably circa 1901-05. Each building facade includes a twin and a single, two pane window with stone surround and scrolled pediments. Original sash windows are now replaced with uPVC/aluminium but these could be reinstated over time. Photographs show this range to be generally intact above first floor level. A stone pilaster former bank front to two of the properties probably dates from the inter-war years. All other shop fronts are modern but original stone consoles survive. Good photographic record of original shop fronts for historical replacement potential.

Property P1 stands at the northern end of range R1. This 'Bank Baroque' styled former Capital and Counties bank (1901-02 by Greenhalgh and Brockbank), already recognised for its architectural quality in its local listing. This is a decorative and imposing landmark building of red brick and stone dressings to give a banded effect, with a stone and stucco ground floor. Striking corner turret with cupola and Dutch gables with multi-pane windows and polychrome arched heads. The main entrance at the corner comprises a decorative segmental pediment with crested cartouche, supported upon brackets and blocked columns.

Range R2 is a three storey red brick and stucco block, circa 1938, in a reductive Art Deco style with articulated facade including two storey bay windows and brick or stucco pilasters. The parapet includes a Roman tile coping, echoing that at the neighbouring Sunray House. At the parapet two of these terminate in charming and decorative arched waterfall details. Windows are generally modern uPVC but one set of timber French doors with fanlight retains what appears to be the original coloured glass lead lights in an Arts & Crafts style. The building stands on the site of the grounds to the former Hamlet Court.

Range R3 is a three storey red and brown brick block, circa 1938, in a simple brick panel and pilaster design with a projecting central block, soldier course lintols, panel heads and brick sills. Pitched clay tile roof. Non-original windows. All shops are modern but all consoles and dividing pilasters are intact. The building stands on the site of the grounds to the former Hamlet Court.

Range R4 comprises three set-back, two storey villas with ground floor shops projected to the street line. These include, first, a twin gabled, twin bay window villa with heavy timber dentil detailing at the overhanging eaves and gable roof. Two shops to the front apparently have original decorative shop fronts generally concealed behind modern roller shutters. The two shops are bridged at roof level by an ornamental clock mounted onto a timber segmental pediment. Either side the original consoles survive. Second, a similar but much less ornamented double bay window villa with a modern concrete tile roof. The shop to the front is modern. Thirdly, three shops retain a unifying rendered coping with decorative raised central section. There then follows a modern infill alteration at Sainsbury's. Finally and on the corner of Ditton Court Road, a corner turreted and gabled two storey villa in red brick and stone window surrounds, column and head details. The original red clay tile roof is decorative and the gable wall presents a decorative cement swag. The roof has an obtrusive and later dormer window. The shop is modern.

Range R5 appears to be a circa 1910-20 two storey row of 4 buildings that are rendered and altered. One building retains its original decorative 7 paned (with fanlights) bay window and fully glazed shop front below.

Range R6 is described as extending from St Helen's Road to Canewdon Road. In the main the range includes two storey, semi-detached Edwardian villas of varying designs in red brick or stucco, with original bay windows, gables and roof forms intact. Most of the buildings have dormer windows. Few original window frames survive. The shop fronts were added later when these residencies were converted to retail use and the original front gardens were lost. Whilst there is significant erosion to the original buildings there appears to be sufficient original form to allow practical restoration over time.

Range R7, south of Canewdon road is a terrace of six, two storey, red brick buildings with uniform bay and dormer windows, echoing upper HCR. Slate roofs are divided with fire break parapet party walls. At the corner of Canewdon Road the bay has been enlarged to wrap around the corner, allowing space for a second dormer facing onto Canewdon Road. This building has also been enlarged in width to allow an addition single window into the main facade, with a third, small dormer above. This has allowed separation to create a small additional shop below. No original window frames survive but there is sufficient original form to allow practical restoration.

Range R8 comprises a two storey semi-detached Edwardian building, the remaining half of what appears to be a further two storey semi-detached Edwardian building and a later, 1930's intervention, mimicking the style of the Havens building in upper HCR. The complete semi-detached pair appear to be in their original form with paired gables and bay windows. A corner window is original but with a modern frame. Both fronts have been rendered and window frames are modern. To the north is as small infill extension. At ground level one shop remains but is modern and elsewhere the ground floor rooms have been recently

converted to residential use. The remaining half semi-detached has two bay windows and roof alterations including the addition of 4 dormer windows, all modern. The origins of this building are difficult to read. However, at ground level there is a bank styled, red brick facade with decorative stone pilasters, a brick arched entrance doorway with decorative capitals and three brick arched windows with stone sills. The 1930's intervention is Art Deco in style with faience cladding, three main bays divided by pilasters with entablature with central segmental arch pediment and parapet. Decorative ground floor consoles are intact. Otherwise the shop front and first floor windows are modern.

Range R9 three 3 storey blocks and four 2 storey buildings. The first 3 storey block has four two pane windows at first floor, repeated at second floor. A further bay of windows returns at the northern end. At ground floor level are later added windows. The entrance door has a simple timber pediment supported on pilasters. The building is rendered and the windows are modern. The first and second floor windows have modern balconies. From photographic records this was originally a red brick building with decorative stone or rendered window heads, sliding sash windows (6 panes over 1 pane). The original shops are now lost to residential conversion. The second double fronted and third single fronted 3 storey buildings are later 1930's alterations to the original Edwardian buildings and present 2 storey high curve fronted bay windows with modern frames. Both buildings have a parapet with reductive pediments. The double front building has an articulated frieze and Roman tile coping, mimicking the neighbouring style. One shop front (non-original) remains and otherwise the ground floor has been converted to residential use. Below these buildings are two terraced Edwardian houses with rendered facades and dormer windows (now altered). The windows and doors are now all non-original but there remains evidence of the original shop fascias and the right hand of the two building retains its decorative consoles and pilasters. Finally the range ends with two cottages, one of exceptionally narrow frontage. The narrow frontage is painted brickwork and the other frontage rendered. Whilst windows at first floor appear to be the original openings, all window frames are modern. The narrow house retains a decorative moulding over the original window and door openings.

13.2 Ditton Court Road

The Buildings

Ditton Court Road was laid down in the first years of the C20 although the grounds of Hamlet Court were not infilled until around 1938. This gives the road a mix of mainly Edwardian detached and semi-detached, two storey villas and a few later buildings, one reflecting the Arts & Crafts movement and others C20 Tudor Revival. Of the Edwardian buildings typical in the road are red brick, pebble dash render and vertical clay tiling; bay windows; some stone window surrounds; hipped and gabled clay tiled roofs with chimney stacks; half-timbered gable fronts; arched windows and doorways; sliding sash and casement windows; ornamental balconies. Some elements show clear echoes of the design adopted in HCR.

Only four properties in the road are not original. Two of these were created when a very fine house by H. Leon Cabuche of c.1902 was demolished in 2014. Although the two new properties are reasonably well designed this highlights the role that conservation designation can play.

Cabuche built several other fine and surviving properties (with some alterations) in DCR as well as a fine commercial terrace at the nearby junction of London Road and Burdett Avenue. Significantly, he also designed the nearby Palace Theatre (1912).

Another notable resident lived in Ditton Court Road. Dr Gordon Hopkins a surgeon had his surgery at no. 40 and gave his name to one of the wards at Southend General Hospital.

Most of the main original building fabric in DCR including building form, walls, roofs, bays, window and door openings is intact. Typically, some of the degradable fabric has been lost but these elements are recoverable and replaceable, where such an approach is desirable to the building owner. Other local conservation areas have seen these elements slowly reinstated over time. The degradable elements include many of the window frames and roof finishes. A good number of original front doors and some other decorative features, such as balcony rails, survive.

A representative number of the houses are identified as follows:



8-10 Ditton Court Road: two semi-detached houses with original balconies and front doors



18 Ditton Court Road: a detached villa with emphasised arched entrance. Note repeat of door type to previous image



19 Ditton Court Road: two substantial semi-detached houses with embellished bay windows and arched doorways



30-26 Ditton Court Road: variation in Edwardian design illustrating the compatible individualism employed by differing building contractors. [38 by architect H. Leon Cabuche]



27 Ditton Court Road: a substantial house c.1938 recalling the Arts & Crafts of Voysey, Mackintosh, Lutyens and Baillie Scott



Corner of Ditton Court Road and Canewdon Road : a dramatic Edwardian corner turret building and a clear ascension of window hierarchy facing DCR



The above property as originally built and with references in Hamlet Court Road



46 Ditton Court Road: an Edwardian bungalow with bay windows, lunette window and tapering chimney stacks



Westcliff Towers 58-56 Ditton Court Road: an imposing semi-detached pair of Edwardian houses with multiple references to HCR

- the corner turret
- elaborate arched entrances
- dormer windows
- tripartite window hierarchy



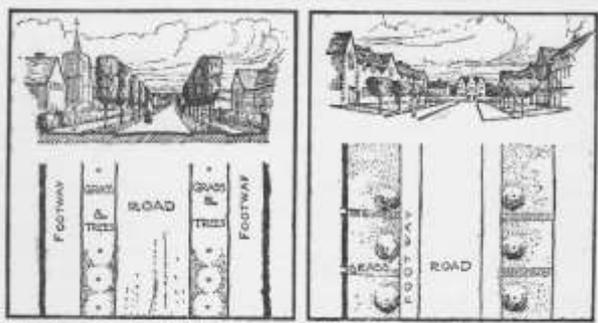


69/67 & 71/73 Ditton Court Road: Two of an impressive row of Edwardian houses built as maisonettes on the east side of the road with dominant bay and dormer windows, echoing others in the road

The Urban Landscaping

Ditton Court Road was laid out as the earliest known residential example of planted verges in Southend-on-Sea. This is very significant in the history of our town and this treatment pre-dates the Chalkwell, West Leigh and Thorpe Bay estates by some 30 years. The road was constructed c.1904 by Tapp Jones & Son and is very well documented in a series of photographs of the time (in itself significant). The planting is very particular with trees spaced very closely at $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 to the road width as opposed to the more usual urban tree spacing, approximately equal to the road width. This spacing suggests a raised hedge feature rather than the usual tree avenue. Post and chain edging was used. Today the planted verges survive together with a good number of the original *Ilex aquifolium* (Holly) trees.

At the early part of the C20 this treatment can be identified to Raymond Unwin and the Garden Suburb Movement and although research has not yet established a direct connection this is most historically significant. This has been recognised by Dr M Miller, a leading international authority on the Garden City/Suburb Movement (see Appendix A). These verges need to be protected and this is a major reason for the conservation designation of Ditton Court Road. Perhaps planting restoration might one day be possible and HCCF would certainly be willing to investigate the feasibility of such a project.



Illus. 228.—Examples of lighter building roads and drives as used at Harwich, Leichworth, and Hampstead.



Extract from Unwin's 'Town Planning in Practice' showing, on the left, the close planting of a raised hedge, as used in Ditton Court Road and the surviving Holly trees

The likelihood of a connection to the Garden Suburb movement goes beyond the evidence of the existing verges and photographs from the early C20. Lord Brassey, a Liberal MP, mentioned earlier as an influential local landowner, had connection to both Raymond Unwin through Henrietta Barnett (originator of Hampstead Garden Suburb) and Tapp Jones & Sons as the Brassey surveyors. Then there was Henry Vivian, another Liberal MP who strongly supported the co-operative housing movement of the time. This was closely related to the Garden City/Suburb movement. We know that Raymond Unwin was in Southend building Ozone Cottage locally in Pembury Road in 1902-4 and Henry Vivian was supported by Brassey at Bretham Garden Suburb and visited Southend Council in 1908 complimenting the layout of DCR. All of these protagonists knew each other and so it is not difficult to see the Garden Suburb thinking appearing in an area influenced by Lord Brassey.



Ditton Court Road looking north from Canewdon Road. Note the post and chain edging widely used at Hampstead Garden Suburb



Ditton Court Road looking north east and showing the open site of Hamlet Court.
Note the particularly close spacing of the trees



Ditton Court Road looking south showing the planting and post and chain edging



A further image of Ditton Court Road looking south

13.3 Preston Road

The Buildings

Preston Road was laid down in the first years of the C20. The road contains a mix of mainly Edwardian detached and semi-detached, two storey villas. Of the Edwardian buildings typical in the road are red brick, pebble dash render and vertical clay tiling; bay windows; some stone window surrounds; hipped and gabled clay tiled roofs with chimney stacks; half-timbered gable fronts; arched windows and doorways; sliding sash and casement windows; ornamental balconies, generally matching Ditton Court Road.

All properties within the identified part of the road are original.

Most notably 35 Preston Road (see below) was designed in the Arts & Crafts style by H Fuller Clark. It is a remarkable building and probably worthy of National Listing. Fuller Clark was not a prolific architect but did also design the wonderful Arts & Crafts Blackfriars Public House in London. We are fortunate to have a building of this pedigree in our area.

Most of the main original building fabric including building form, walls, roofs, bays, window and door openings is intact. Typically, some of the degradable fabric has been lost but these elements are recoverable and replaceable, where such an approach is desirable to the building owner. Other local conservation areas have seen these elements slowly reinstated over time. The perishable elements include many of the window frames and roof finishes. A good number of original front doors and some other decorative features, such as balcony rails, survive.

A representative number of the houses are identified as follows:



42 Preston Road: Edwardian semi-detached with fine roof form and paired gables and bracketed bay windows and decorative balustraded porch canopy. Simple lunette dormer window (referencing DCR). Familiar Edwardian window design of multi-pane over single pane (albeit modern replacements)



35 Preston Road: Red brick and rendered early C20 Arts & Crafts house with two storey decorative bay and multi-pane windows, echoing the former HSBC building in HCR



33 Preston Road: A double fronted Edwardian red brick villa with decorative bays and familiar multi-pane over single pane windows



30 Preston Road: An Edwardian semi-detached pair of highly decorated houses with elaborate and individual half-timbered gables and half hipped roofs, swept down over decorative balconies, bay windows, arched openings and numerous decorative features



23 Preston Road: A large Edwardian villa with half-timbered gabled bay exposed decorative rafter feet, balcony making canopied entrance. Brick pier boundary wall. This property is now renovated



21 Preston Road: A modest Edwardian villa with large half-timbered gable over bay windows and decorative arched entrance porch



5-7 Preston Road: Semi-detached pair of large houses with dormer windows and windows in half-timbered gable windows, bay windows, arched entrance porches with unusual angled windows above



Preston Road has one of the finest avenues of Edwardian trees in the borough which makes an important contribution to the urban quality of the road

13.4 Cossington Road

The Buildings

Cossington Road is identified by Purcell as a road for wider study. There is no doubt that the road does not contain as many quality Edwardian buildings, nor such clear linkage to Hamlet Court Road, nor does it have the landscaped heritage of Preston Road. However, the road does contain a number of interesting Edwardian buildings which, as in Preston Road, are a mix of Edwardian detached and semi-detached, two storey villas, typical of the neighbourhood. Of the Edwardian buildings typical in the road are red brick, pebble dash render and vertical clay tiling; bay windows; some stone window surrounds; hipped and gabled clay tiled roofs with chimney stacks; half-timbered gable fronts; arched windows and doorways; sliding sash and casement windows; ornamental balconies, generally similar to Preston Road.

All properties within the identified part of the road are original.

Most of the main original building fabric including building form, walls, roofs, bays, window and door openings is intact. Typically, some of the degradable fabric has been lost but these elements are recoverable and replaceable, where such an approach is desirable to the building owner. Other local conservation areas have seen these elements slowly reinstated over time. The perishable elements include many of the window frames and roof finishes. A good number of original front doors and some other decorative features, such as balcony rails, survive.

A representative number of the houses are identified as follows:



32 Cossington Road: A detached corner property with a dominant corner facing bay and half-timbered gable. A second decorated gablet elevates the flank which also has a decorative balcony and entry porch



26-24 Cossington Road: A semi-detached pair of Edwardian villas with centrally paired gables with bull's eye windows, full width balconies creating entrance porches and ground floor bay windows



7-9 Cossington Road: A dramatic pair of half-timbered detached Edwardian villas with heavy timber detailing. No. 7 is not in good repair but is repairable. No. 7 appears to retain most of its original windows as multi-pane lights over Casements. At ground floor are bay windows



3 Cossington Road: A substantial red brick double fronted villa with square and angled bay windows to either side, a framed, arched and pediment entrance, balcony and decorative tripartite window above, all topped with a turret cupola



1 Cossington Road: A substantial red brick double fronted villa with identical twin bays with decorative gables including ornamental barge boards, bull's eye windows and insignia swags. Ornamental column entrance with segmental arch pediment and similarly decorated window above

13.5 Canewdon Road

The Buildings

Canewdon Road runs at right angles to Ditton Court, Preston Roads and Cossington Road. It contains one major property described below. Sunray House is an important example of Art Deco architecture in Westcliff and together with other local buildings including the substantial Argyll House to the south and Havens to the north creates an important local axis of Art Deco influence.



Sunray House: This is a white rendered Art Deco block of flats with two curve fronted bays with what appears to be the original horizontal Crittal windows intact and a bold central bay with chevron glazed vertical light, contrasting black entrance with coloured light motive. The top floor is a modern addition.

Appendix A – please note paragraph 7 in particular

Dr Mervyn Miller
CHARTERED ARCHITECT AND TOWN PLANNER
11 Silver Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts SG7 5QJ (01462) 742685
E mail: mail@mervarch.co.uk

Mervyn Miller, PhD, B. Arch (Hons), M. Urban Planning, FRIBA, FRTPI, IoHBC

For the attention of the Hamlet Court Conservation Forum, Southend-on-Sea Borough
Officers and Purcell Consultants

1. I have exchanged correspondence with Andy Atkinson, M.Sc., FRSA, Chairman of the Hamlet Court Conservation Forum [HCCF], about the historical significance of Ditton Court Road [DCR], Westcliff-on-Sea, its property development and avenue landscaping, and the possibility of its protection as a designated heritage asset. I understand that The Council's Consultants, Purcell, have included DCR as an area warranting further examination rather than immediate designation.

2. As an architect, town planner and historian, I have spent over 45 years researching and recording the history of the Garden City movement and the contribution of the practice of Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin to Arts and Crafts housing design, and specifically (Sir) Raymond Unwin's influence on the evolution of statutory town planning, from the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909, to his death in 1940. I have published the histories of Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb and an English Heritage book, *Introducing English Garden Cities*. I am recognised as an international authority on the Garden City movement, having contributed conference papers and seminars worldwide over the past 30 years.

3. In October 1903, at the invitation of the developers of Letchworth, First Garden City Ltd., Unwin spent three weeks on site and in conjunction with Parker prepared the layout plan, which was approved in April 1904, after which development commenced, subject to design control drafted by Parker and Unwin. In 1904-5 Unwin was appointed by the emergent Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust to plan its new garden suburb. Development commenced after the land was formally conveyed to the HGS Trust in May 1907, upon a refined layout plan by Unwin.

4. Barry Parker (1867-1947) and Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) had joined in practice in 1896 in Buxton, Derbyshire. They were well-aware of the procedure of the ground landlord imposing restrictive covenants to preserve amenity under leases to developers or individuals. Local authorities imposed byelaws under public health legislation. Parker and Unwin initially designed Arts and Crafts houses: although Unwin was committed to reform of working class housing this was largely theoretical until 1902-3 when he designed cottage groups for the initial phase of development for Rowntree workers at New Earswick north of York, codified under the Joseph Rowntree Village Trust in 1904. Cottage estates at Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb followed until the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act created the exchequer subsidies for local authority council housing.

5. Individual houses by Parker and Unwin spanned a range, an important constituent of which was 'the smaller middle-class house for a socially-enlightened client'. Two of these were commissioned by doctors living in suburban Southend-on-Sea and were built in 1902-04:

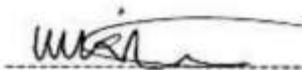
no.60 Leighcliff Road, Leigh-on-Sea for Dr Gallie Fraser and 'Ozone Cottage, no.20 Pembury Road, Westcliff-on-Sea for Dr Valentine Knaggs. Correspondence preserved in the Essex Record Office appear to indicate that these houses were principally 'Unwin projects', that Unwin had visited the area, and was familiar with the byelaw requirements.

6. Residential development of Westcliff-on-Sea was stimulated by the opening of the railway station in 1895. The land embracing Ditton Court Road was in pole position curving round to approach the station at one end. The intrinsic qualities of the development are manifest in a series of historic postcards in which HCCF state that it has identified 'Garden City landscaping characteristics' in the avenue planting alongside DCR, which correspond to an illustration in Raymond Unwin's book 'Town Planning in Practice' (1909) (Illus. 228 'Examples of lighter building roads and drives as used at Earswick, Letchworth and Hampstead'). Andy Atkinson has stated that he considers that there is a link 'to Raymond Unwin's design influence at the time'.

7. While recognising and setting out above confirmation of Raymond Unwin's presence in Westcliff-on-Sea in 1902-04, at which time a document prepared by the Ground Landlord offering leases for plots along what became DCR, might have been available for inspection to assess potential for further P&U projects. I understand from Andy Atkinson that DCR was laid out in 1904-6 with the avenue planting implemented at that time, and it registers impressively on the postcards. This is a matter of significance related to the urgency of formulating an appropriate conservation policy to ensure its survival, and enhancement as an exemplar of the high standards demanded, an objective which I wholeheartedly endorse. However, I have concluded that a specific link to Raymond Unwin remains unproven and coincidental.

8. Finally, there was no statutory town planning procedure in 1904-6. Early development at both Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb represented a broadening of the Ground Landlord powers to embrace communal benefits. Demonstration of these matters at Letchworth, and, particularly, Hampstead Garden Suburb paved the way for the emergence of statutory planning in 1909 in the Housing and Town Planning Act (a landmark which publication of Unwin's book was intended to commemorate as a practical manual).

Dr Mervyn Miller, Ashwell, 2nd January 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mervyn Miller', written over a horizontal dashed line.