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BRENTWOOD

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Essex County Council

Brentwood Borough Council

This document was produced by Essex County Council for Brentwood Borough Council.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brentwood Borough Council commissioned Essex County Council to prepare the Conservation Area Appraisal and Review in 2006. The research and fieldwork were carried out between November 2006 and January 2007.

Conservation Areas are 'Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). They were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. Local authorities have a duty to designate conservation areas, to formulate policies for their preservation and enhancement, and to keep them under review.

Designation of a Conservation Area extends planning controls over certain types of development, principally the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees. Local authorities will also formulate policies in their local plans or local development frameworks to preserve the character of their conservation areas. However, designation does not prevent any change within conservation areas, and they will be subject to many different pressures (good and bad) that will affect their character and appearance.

Government Planning Policy Guidance 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG 15), emphasises that the character of conservation areas derives not simply from the quality of individual buildings, but also depends on 'the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular "mix" of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of space between buildings' (para. 4.2).

2. PLANNING POLICIES

The Brentwood Replacement Local Plan was adopted in August 2005 and covers the period to 2011. Work has begun on a Local Development Framework as required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which will replace the Local Plan. In the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan, Brentwood is a second rank shopping centre, being classed as a Principal Town Centre. The Local Plan's Shopping Policies are intended to maintain and enhance shopping provision in the Borough to enable it to remain competitive within a shopping hierarchy dominated by the Sub-Regional Centres at Romford, Lakeside, Basildon and Chelmsford. The Plan refers to the possibility of a retail market in the town centre.

Brentwood Town Centre is one of thirteen conservation areas in the Borough. In accordance with its obligations under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and PPG 15, the Borough Council is resolved to make use of its additional statutory powers in conservation areas to protect their special character and architectural and historic interest. The Replacement Local Plan includes a comprehensive set of policies to try and ensure that where development takes place in a conservation area, it is sympathetic and to a high standard of design (Policy C14). To this end, it intends to carry out conservation area character appraisals 'to clearly assess and define their character allowing informed planning decisions and identification of what should be preserved and enhanced' (Replacement Local Plan para. 9.54).

The Replacement Local Plan also contains policies to preserve the character, historic interest and setting of listed buildings (Policies C15, C16 and C17). It states that the Borough intends to supplement the statutory list by compiling a local list of buildings of local or historic interest. Inclusion in this list will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

The crucial role of advertisements and shop fronts in affecting the appearance of town centres and commercial is recognised in the Replacement Local Plan, which has a series of policies to control them and ensure sympathetic design (Policies C20-24), as well as giving comprehensive design advice in Appendix 3.

Section 12 of the Replacement Local Plan sets out policies for Brentwood town centre designed to secure its economic vitality and role as a community centre for the Borough. In 1970, a Brentwood Town Centre Plan was published by the County Planner in consultation with Brentwood Urban District Council. Its objectives were, *inter alia*, 'to increase the visual and economic attractiveness of the Town Centre by redevelopment, to a high standard of design', 'to retain buildings and features of quality', to 'divert traffic away from the Town Centre', to 'reduce/eliminate pedestrian/vehicular conflict', and to 'provide for efficient public transport'. Some of the aspirations of this Plan, which have been incorporated in the more recent Local Plan, have been achieved. New car parks have been created, extra shopping provision has been developed by the construction of a precinct, the high density residential development envisaged west of Crown Street has recently been completed, and since that time the demolition of existing buildings has been kept to a minimum (though a number of buildings in the High Street had already been lost). However, they have not always been achieved as satisfactorily as they might. Only one of the car parks is a multi-storey, the scale of the development round the shopping precinct is such that it looms over that part of the town, whilst any of the objectives relating to traffic remain unattainable, though that is a problem that is not peculiar to Brentwood and the most recent High Street Transportation Study proposals are a further attempt to resolve some of these issues. William Hunter Way (the former North Service Road), has been improved to the north of the High Street, but it serves more for access to car parks and a supermarket than to take traffic off the High Street. Current proposals (see *Fig. 71*) to repave the High Street would tend to encourage more traffic on to William Hunter Way.

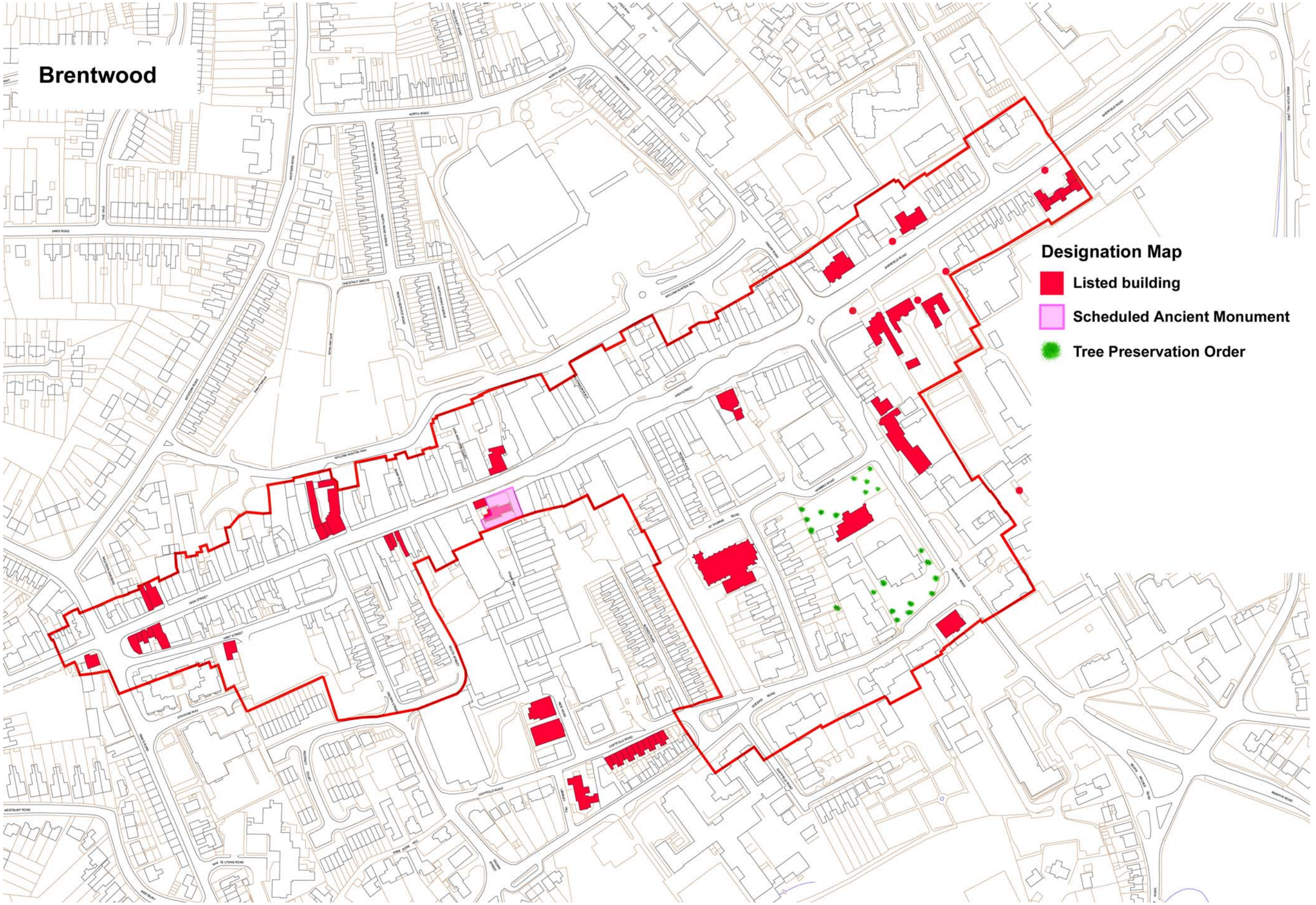

Fig. 1 Map of Brentwood town centre showing the conservation area, listed buildings and other designations

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3. HERITAGE, CONSERVATION AREA AND OTHER DESIGNATIONS (*FIG. 1*)

The Brentwood conservation area is confined to the frontages of the High Street and the west end of Shenfield Road, with an extension southward to include Hart Street, and another to embrace the Anglican parish church and the Catholic cathedral as far as Queen's Road. Formerly there were three conservation areas in the town centre, the Wilson's Corner, Chapel and Hart Street Conservation Areas. They occupied much the same area as the existing conservation area, but were separated by two very short stretches of High Street frontage. These three areas were amalgamated into one in 2000.

Within the conservation area, there are about thirty entries on the statutory list of listed buildings. The Brentwood list was resurveyed in 1994 and is of better than average quality. The ruin of St. Thomas' chapel in the High Street is listed grade II and is a monument scheduled under the 1979 Ancient Monuments Act. The scheduling takes precedence over the listing.

Some trees within the conservation area located in the vicinity of Brentwood Cathedral are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (approximate position shown on *Fig. 1*). Trees within the conservation area enjoy protection inasmuch as anyone carrying out works to a tree in a conservation area must give written notification to the local planning department at least six weeks beforehand. There are no public rights of way in the conservation area.

4. CHARACTER STATEMENT

Brentwood is a busy and densely populated commuter town. The conservation area mainly comprises the High Street, an area of Victorian expansion to the south of it, and adjacent parts of Shenfield Road and Ingrave Road. These form strikingly different areas. Shenfield Road, and Ingrave Road, are distinguished by Georgian houses, and landmark buildings such as Brentwood School and the Catholic cathedral, set in ample tree-lined spaces. The High Street has a strongly developed retail function. Much of it has been redeveloped since the Second World War, with the result that the town retains little sense of its origins as a medieval market town or of a major coaching place in Georgian times. Indifferent maintenance and signage give the High Street a rather depressed appearance, which contrasts with the evident prosperity of the surrounding area.

The streets south of the High Street are characterised by rows of late Victorian houses, some of which are now used as shops and offices. The north-south grain of the street pattern has here been disrupted by late 20th-century developments, notably a new shopping precinct. Mature trees are very much a feature of the conservation area, not only of the suburban parts such as Shenfield and Ingrave Roads but also the eastern end of the High Street.

5. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Brentwood is fortunate in being covered by the Victoria County History (VCH Essex viii) which gives an authoritative and definitive account of its history. Its archaeology and topography have been outlined by Eddy and Petchey (1983), and brought up to date by Medlycott (1999). The emergence of the medieval town in the 12th century was outlined by J.H. Round (1924). Two recently published histories are those by Tames (2000) and Clamp (2004).

The town is located on the old Roman London to Colchester road, where this follows a ridge of high ground formed by the Claygate Beds and Bagshot Sands overlying the London Clay. Despite the existence of an Iron Age camp at South Weald about one mile to the north, and its position on the Roman road, there is no evidence of settlement there before the Middle Ages. This is likely to reflect not simply a lack of archaeological activity in the town and its environs, but rather the formerly thickly wooded character of the area, the poor soils of mixed sand and clay and hilly terrain not being favourable for cultivation.

The medieval history of Brentwood is complicated, again because it was heavily forested and only colonised relatively late. It was not a manor recorded in Domesday Book (1086). It was first mentioned as 'Burnt Wood' in 1176. It is next referred to as a place called Cocksted in the area of 'Burnt Wood' where, by a charter datable to 1177-84, the canons of St. Osyth's Priory were licensed by the king to clear 40 acres of ground in what was the royal forest of Essex. In effect, the canons, like many other manorial lords at this time, must have established a planned town. It is uncertain quite which part of the High Street was occupied by the original settlement, but it is likely to have been in the area of the chapel, probably to the west of it. In 1234, Thomas de Canville, lord of the adjacent manor of Shenfield, obtained a licence from the king to establish house plots on the side of the main road just as the canons of St. Osyth had on the other side. This has been taken to indicate that initially the settlement at Brentwood was confined to the south side of the High Street.

A market and fair were founded by 1227, if not earlier. The location of the settlement on the London road at an intermediate point between Romford and Chelmsford, and at or close to junctions with roads to Chipping Ongar, Billericay, and south to the Thames at Tilbury or Greys, was sufficient to ensure its commercial success.

The town lies within the parish of South Weald, of which Cocksted was one of the three principal manors. A chapel, the existing ruined St. Thomas's, was founded in 1221. This was a chapel of ease to the main parish church. It nevertheless obtained burial rights, normally jealously guarded by the mother church, as burials of possibly 17th- or 18th-century date were found to the north of it during street enhancement works in 1997.

The medieval town was essentially ribbon development along the main road. As a planned town, there would have been regularly laid out plots initially of uniform size. The road, of Roman origin, was wider than today, having been encroached upon to varying degrees at varying times. Old frontage lines are represented by Georgian buildings in Shenfield Road: on the south side, these are up to 20m or more behind the existing frontage, giving a former road width of about 40m. The east end of the High Street is similarly 30-40m between frontages. The High Street remains very wide as far as St. Thomas chapel, after which it narrows appreciably to about 15m. The existence of 15th-century buildings on both sides of the street show that this had happened by an early date.

It has been suggested that originally the town was only built up on the south side of the street, but these buildings also indicate that this could not have been the situation for very long. The line of Queens and Coptfold Roads forms a very pronounced straight boundary, particularly conspicuous on old maps, south of and paralllel to the High Street. It looks as if it originated as a back lane to long plots on the south side of the street, though it may simply be following the contours as beyond them the ground drops steeply to the south.

The market was in the area between Hart Street and the High Street. It is shown in that position on a map of 1717 (*Fig. 2*), though by that date it only occupied the eastern end of that area where the Assize House was built in 1597. It is possible that the market was at first an area about 200m long in the original very wide High Street, and that through encroachment in this commercial part of the town, the High Street grew narrower either side of the marketplace as traders competed for a prime position on the frontage. There can be no doubt that the buildings in Hart Street represent market infill. They have the typical characteristics of small units on short plots with virtually no associated land. The 1717 map and the 1st edition OS map of 1872 (*Fig. 3*) show two very narrow 'rows' at the east end of Hart Street like those to be found in the former marketplaces at Saffron Walden and Bury St. Edmunds.

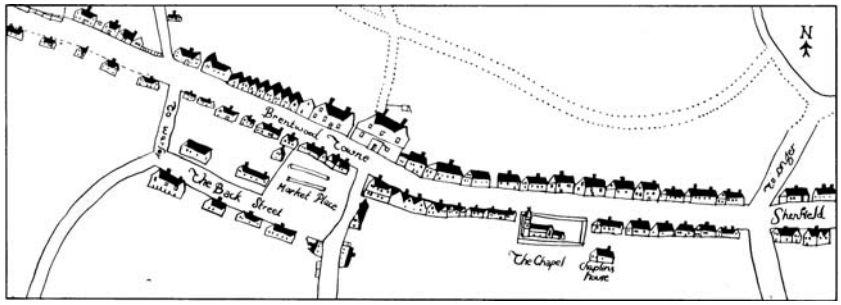

Fig. 2 Map of Brentwood in 1717

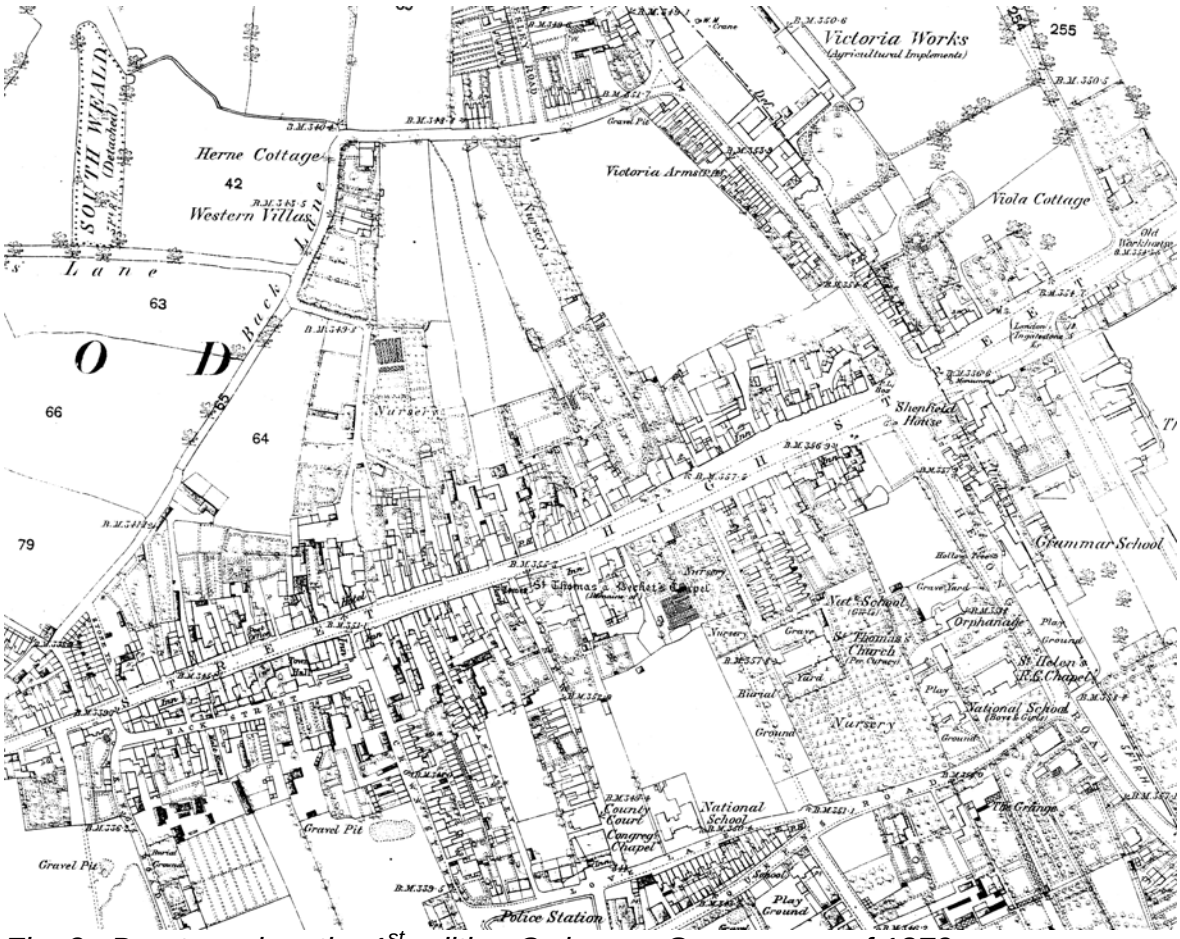

Fig. 3 Brentwood on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872

In 1388, a chantry was founded in the chapel by Edward Langley, Duke of York, an event that probably reflects the prominence that the town enjoyed through its position on the main road from London into East Anglia. Peace sessions were held at Brentwood in 1377-78, just as assizes were to be sometimes in the 16th and 17th centuries. Although a wide range of trades were carried on, the town seems not to have developed any industrial specialisation like the cloth towns of north Essex. Ninety-three men were assessed for the 1523 lay subsidy, when Brentwood was the most populous place in the Chafford Hundred. The Hearth Tax reveals there to have been 135 houses in 1670. In 1686, a survey of accommodation in the county listed 110 beds in the town and stabling for 185 horses, one of the highest totals, but behind Romford, Ingatestone, Chelmsford, and Colchester. The market ceased to operate by the end of the 18th century, but the coaching trade grew considerably. By 1791, there were three daily coach services from London to Ipswich calling at the White Hart, and the services became more frequent still before declining with the advent of the railway. The 19th century saw a fivefold increase in the population, from 1007 in 1801 to 4932 in 1901, the most rapid growth occurring from the 1830s onwards.

The Eastern Counties Railway arrived in 1840, and the line was extended to Colchester in 1843. The location of the station on the lower ground to the south of the town led to urban expansion in this direction, the first significant expansion outside the confines of the High Street where previously the population had been concentrated. New Road and Queens Road had been built by 1844. Already by the 1880s, there was housing development targeting rail commuters to London. The town and its immediate environs attracted educational, medical and other institutions such as the Essex Regiment Barracks (1843), the Essex Lunatic Asylum (1853), the Shoreditch Agricultural and Industrial School (1854), and Highwood Hospital (1904), which helped swell its population.

St. Thomas' chapel (*Fig. 4*) gradually acquired parochial rights in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was replaced by a short-lived new church in 1835, which was succeeded by the existing St. Thomas in 1883. The old chapel was initially used as a school but was partially ruined by 1869. A Catholic church was built in Ingrave Road in 1837 soon after Catholic Emancipation in 1829. It was superseded by a later building (now the old part of the cathedral) which became the seat of a new diocese from 1917.

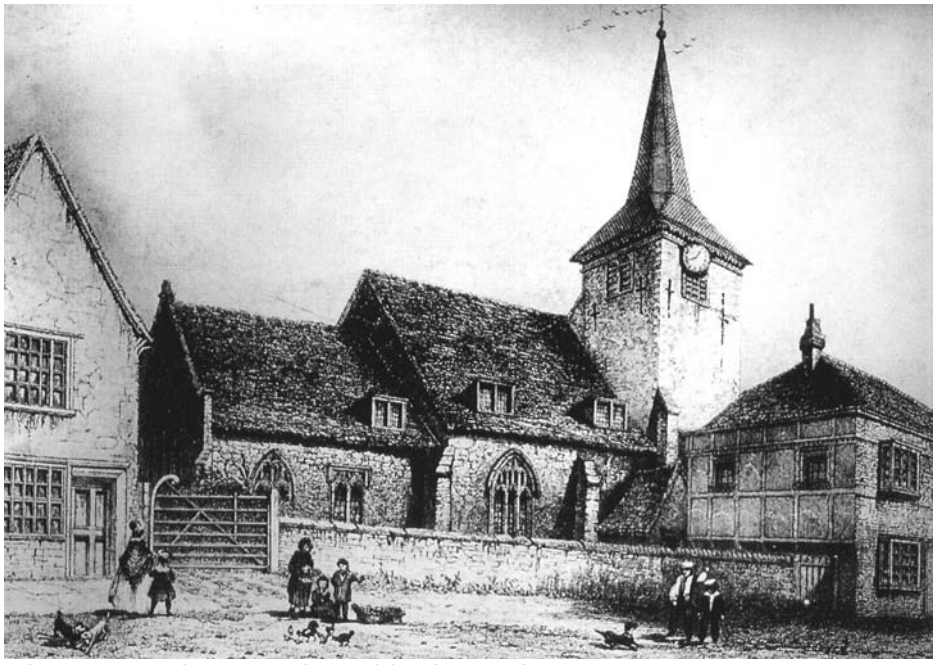

Fig. 4 St. Thomas chapel in the 19th century.

The first half of the 20th century saw the foundation of the Ursuline Convent (1900) in Queens Road, and the expansion of Brentwood School with the acquisition of old buildings and the construction of new ones. The Urban District Council was formed in 1899, being enlarged beyond the immediate town area in 1934. From 1957 it occupied the existing Ingrave Road offices rather than the Town Hall which had been built in 1864. In the 1974 local government reorganisation, Brentwood became a District Council, and in 1993 it acquired Borough status. Industries, such as Burgess and Key, agricultural engineers, and Thermos, and other businesses, have come and gone, but Brentwood has retained the advantages conferred by good transport links and proximity to London, and has continued to prosper.

6. TOPOGRAPHY, STREET PLAN AND SPACES

The town owes its origins to the long straight Roman road round which it has grown up. Thus its main component is the long ribbon development down the High Street, the settlement centre being defined by road junctions, reinforced at the west end by the break in slope as the road drops down to Brook Street.

The medieval town had a very limited street plan, the only significant element being the marketplace which led to the development of Hart Street, a back lane parallel to the High Street. This has survived the changes of the 20th century, and though the market infill origins of the area may no longer be readily apparent, the street plan has been respected by the new housing in Hart Street, the vernacular style of which has succeeded in giving something of a traditional market town character to this part of the conservation area.

Backlands are a characteristic feature of historic town centres, but one vulnerable to unsympathetic use and development. Loss of backlands tends to imply loss of traditional house plots and their walled boundaries, loss of interesting small spaces with yards, gardens, outbuildings and small businesses, and their replacement with a single use such as housing or car parking which obliterates the original grain of the town plan. Backlands present an opportunity to preserve the old boundaries and spaces which have evolved behind street frontages and to use them imaginatively, creating footpaths, shopping arcades, courtyards, and places for small businesses of various types. Although built up, they can survive as interesting spaces.

Today, the backlands in the conservation area are almost entirely developed or have been reduced to yards used for parking. The conservation area boundary follows the ends of the plots behind the north side of the High Street. These consist of service yards and car parks along the side of a new road, William Hunter Way, giving access to the supermarket and main town car parks. The Local Plan contains policies encouraging the development of shops and frontages to the rear of the High Street and facing on to this road. This would greatly improve the appearance of this area but there is little hint of it happening yet.

A few attractive and interesting spaces do survive, such as South Street and the terrace behind Crown Street. The mews-type redevelopment behind the Old Fire Station in Hart Street shows what potential backland spaces have if carefully treated (*Fig. 5*).

Fig. 5 The development behind the Old Fire Station in Hart Street.

South of the High Street, Crown Street, South Street and New Road seem to represent old lanes down the sides of plot divisions through to the probable back lane represented by Coptfold and Queens Roads. This traditionally derived street plan has been partially obscured in South Street and New Road by the construction of new buildings, in particular Becket House, and these places now lie outside the conservation area boundary. This has had the unfortunate effect of depriving two notable listed buildings, the United Reform Church and the former County Court, of their context and marooning them in a sea of modern development. Nevertheless, there are still some interesting and surprising spaces south of the High Street. The entrance to South Street is a remarkable narrow alley flanked by a medieval building; the terrace behind Crown Street is a curiously isolated late 19th-century development, whilst St. Thomas Road and Moores Place follow the grain of the street pattern and have good views of St. Thomas' church and its spire.

7. AGE OF BUILDINGS (*Fig. 6*)

In the 19th century, the housing stock consisted mainly of late medieval and early modern timber-framed buildings one-and-a-half and two storeys in height, mostly rendered or faced up in brick. As elsewhere, Rayleigh being a good example, such buildings were inadequate for the demands of modern retailing and have gradually been demolished and replaced. Whereas a smart brick frontage often sufficed to modernise an old timber frame in the 19th century (*Fig. 7)*, in the 20th century this was not so and the rate of loss accelerated especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike Rayleigh, Brentwood seems to have had no civic society to protect the town's historic features and old buildings.

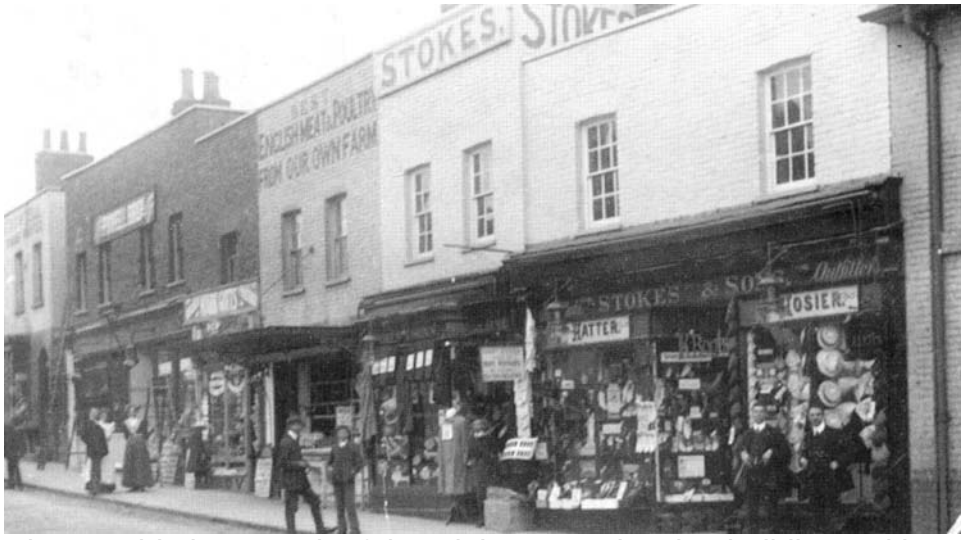

Fig. 7 Old photograph of the High Street showing buildings with brick facades encasing timber frames.

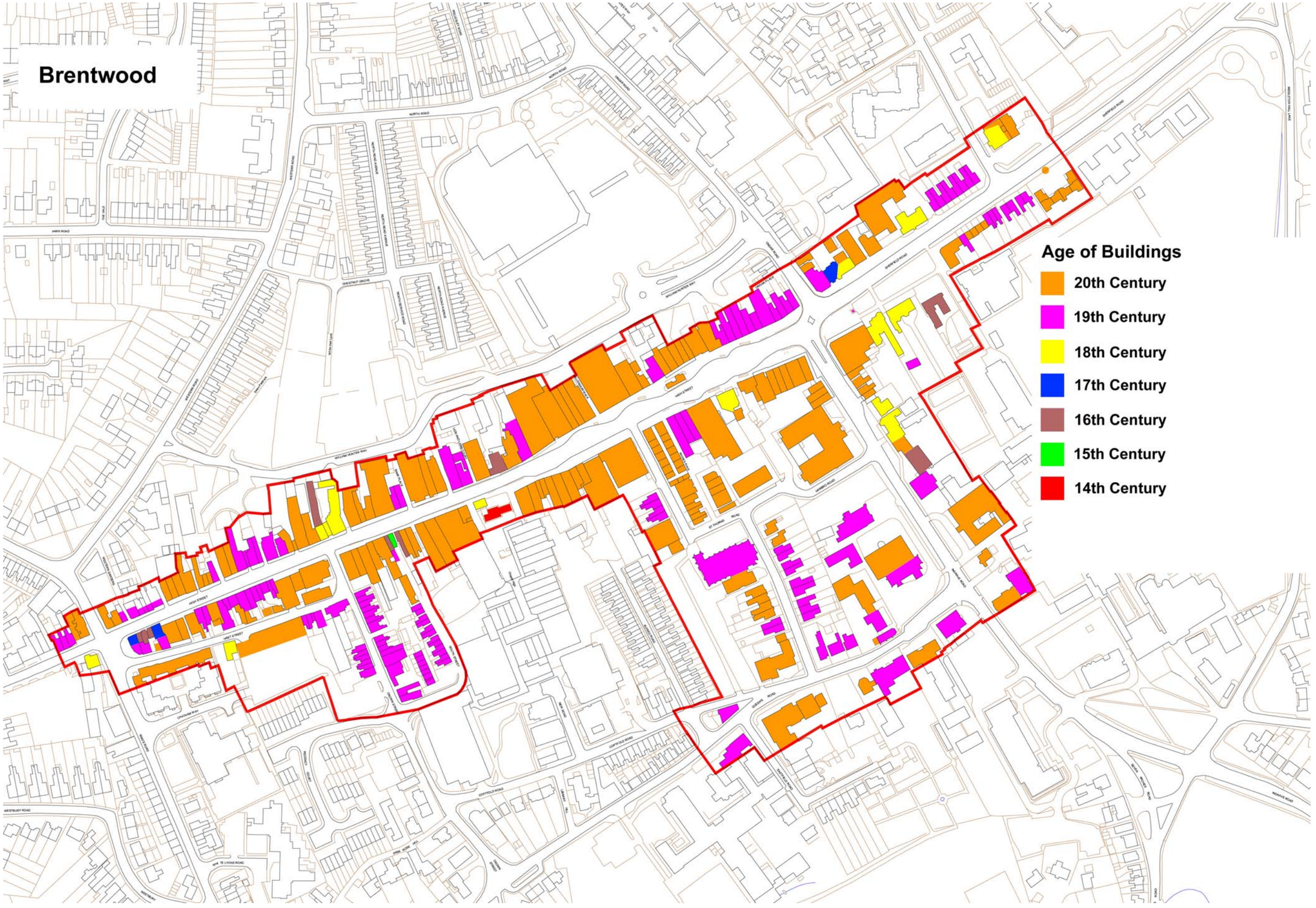

Fig. 6 Map showing the age of buildings in the conservation area.

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One of the better preserved timber-framed houses in the conservation area is Mitre House in Shenfield Road *(Fig. 18)*. It dates from the 15th century and is H-plan with a hall between two cross-wings, though a remodelling with false framing disguises its actual age. In the High Street today, only three buildings are just about recognisable as of late medieval origin, identifiable because of their relatively low height and because they present gables to the frontage. They are nos. 63-65 (*Fig. 8*) on the north side, heavily restored in 1975, and nos. 60-64 and 112-114 on the south side.

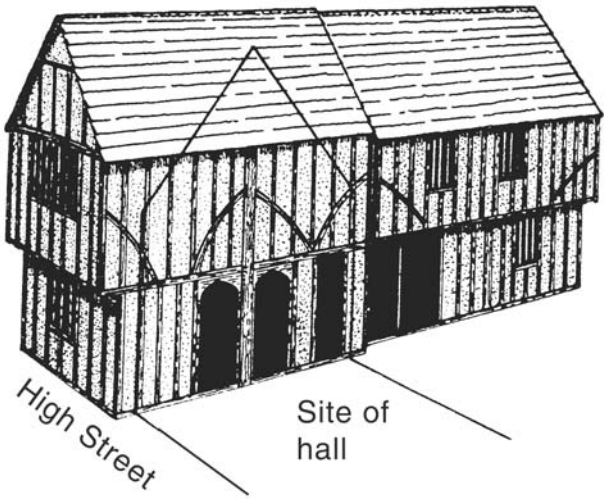

Fig. 8 Timber frame of no.65 High Street (from Scott 1984)

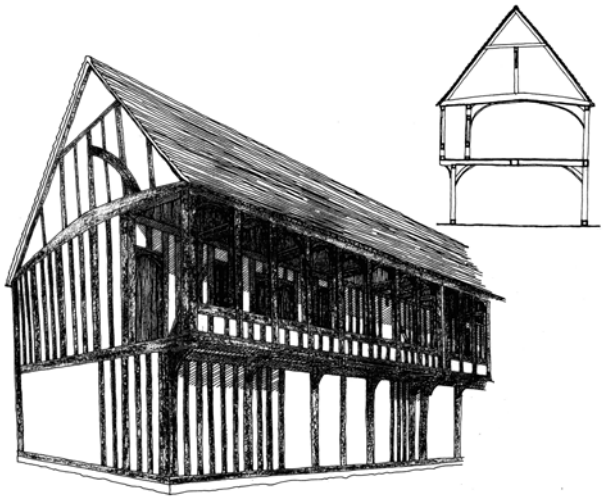

Fig. 9 The late medieval galleried range at the rear of the White Hart (Dave Stenning).

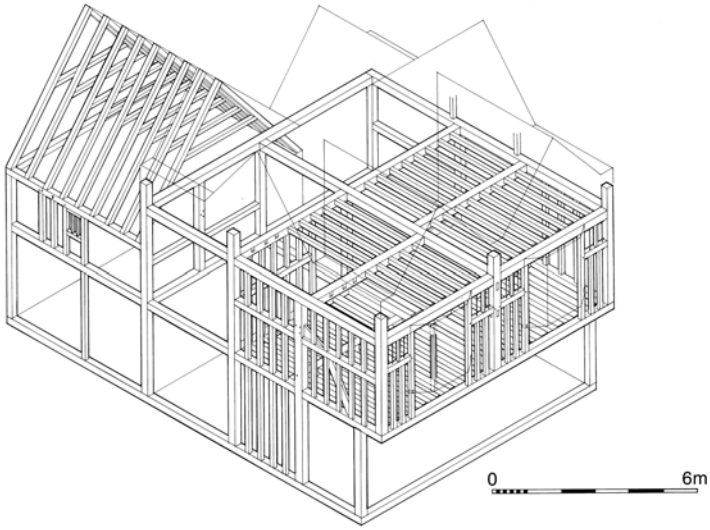

Fig. 10 Timber building dating from 1615 found at nos 101-103 High Street (Corrie Newell)

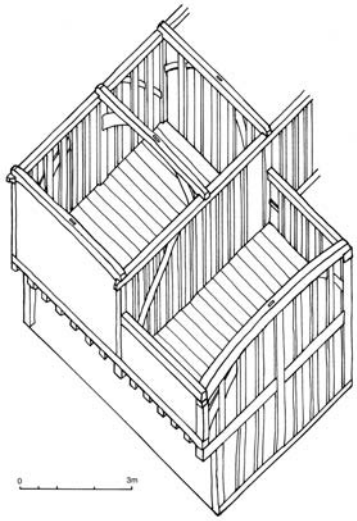

Fig. 11 The timber-framed house discovered at no. 39 Hart Street (after P. Aitkens).

The modern façade of the White Hart gives little clue of the existence of a galleried rear range of about 1500 (*Fig. 9*), making this an outstanding example of a late medieval inn. Behind the 19th-century fronts of nos. 108-114 High Street there are the remains of timber frames. It is probable that there are other survivals in the High Street concealed by later brickwork. Thus the unsuspected remains of a significant timber-framed building were found when nos 101-105 were rebuilt recently (*Fig. 10*). The timber frame only survived at first floor; its style was unusual, and suggests that it belonged to a tradition current in south Essex and the London area. In the recent redevelopment at the south-west end of Hart

Street, a timber-framed building (no. 39) of the early 16th century was identified and recorded prior to demolition (Aitkens 2000). It was a long wall jetty house with an interesting compact plan adapted to cramped urban conditions (*Fig. 11*). The hall was of only a single bay, and one-and-a-half storeys in height. The cross-wing was of two bays, with a third to the rear interpreted as a kitchen.

Tudor brickwork is rare in any town, but the Big Old School of *c.*1568 is a good example, more interesting still on account of the building type.

In Shenfield and Ingrave Roads, there are a number of imposing Georgian houses in brick, some of which have earlier origins. Little of the 18th century survives in the High Street, but no. 12 and Pepperell House, and the Gardeners Arms in Hart Street, are notable.

Many of the 19th-century brick fronts on older buildings have been swept away, such that now relatively few modest 19th-century buildings survive in the High Street. The imposing neo-classical Town Hall (*Fig. 12*) was demolished in 1963. The most prominent survival of the 19th century is the row of three storey buildings at the junction with Ongar Road. In Shenfield Road, there are some good but ill-treated terraces of Victorian villas.

Fig. 12 The High Street in the late 19th century, with the old Town Hall on the right.

The 20th century has seen the construction of some major buildings, such as the main buildings of Brentwood School and the Catholic cathedral. In the High Street, there has been rapid change. Inns such as the Lion and Lamb have been rebuilt stylishly and then ceased to function as public houses. Of the ten inns in the High Street in the 19th century, only two survive. Big stores have erected new premises which have then become the property of others, such as the former Burton store of 1939. The Woolworths building of 1969 is now Marks and Spencer. The Sainsburys store (1967) on the site of the former Palace Cinema is now Boots, whilst the business has transferred to a new supermarket adjacent to the town centre on the Thermos factory site (1998).

Brentwood acquired a shopping precinct in 1975 with the opening of Chapel High to the south of the ruined chapel. This has recently been refurbished as the Bay Tree Centre, whilst the tower block Becket House to the south, formerly offices, has been remodelled as flats.

8. MATERIALS AND DETAILING

It has been seen that very few timber framed buildings survive in the conservation area, and hence weatherboard is rare, though once it would have been a typical feature of the High Street.

In Shenfield and Ingrave Roads, there is much red brick (*Fig. 13*), the Georgian very handsome and usually characterised by flared headers (*Fig. 14*). The Georgian brickwork was often tuck-pointed, a technique in which the joints are highlighted with fillet of white lime mortar. Little of this survives, though patches of it can be seen to good effect on Pepperell House by the ruined chapel. Red brick, whether 18th- or 20th-century, is the predominant building material in the conservation area.

Fig. 13 Red brick buildings and boundary walls with railings at Brentwood School in Ingrave Road.

Yellow stock brick, the principal building material in south Essex in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, is to be found mainly in the High Street, but it has often been painted or rendered. It can be seen to good effect in the row of three storey shops at the east end of the High Street (*Fig. 15*) where it is combined with red brick detailing. Stocks were an economic alternative to red bricks, which were preferred for more important buildings such as Brentwood School. Bricks, possibly both reds and stocks, were made locally to the south of the town in the area round the station. More prestigious than red brick or stocks was white brick, but this is almost unknown in the conservation area, except for the former Catholic church now used as a pre-school nursery (*Fig. 29*) and a house to the west of it. Old brickwork has often been painted or rendered, which always has an adverse effect on its character, and creates a maintenance problem. It has usually been repointed in cement, often unnecessarily, something which is potentially damaging and usually visually unsatisfactory.

Fig. 14 Georgian brickwork with flared headers and penny-struck pointing (Roden House, Shenfield Road).

Fig. 15 Yellow stock brickwork with red brick detailing at nos 1-23 High Street.

In modern buildings, red bricks are very variable, being obtained from a wide variety of sources, and do not always harmonise with the local palette of materials. This is an increasing problem as there is no longer a mass produced supply of soft red bricks of a traditional Essex appearance made from local clays. Very unattractive concrete bricks have been used in some modern buildings.

The roofs of the timber-framed buildings would have been of handmade peg tiles, and such tiles are to be found on the 18th-century buildings. 19th- and older 20th-century buildings with steeply pitched roof have machine made roof tiles, but the slacker-pitched roofs of this age are covered with slate.

Windows in the 18th- and 19th-century are mostly vertical sliding sashes, with small panes in the older ones, and larger panes with fewer glazing bars in the more modern ones. Several buildings (e.g. Newnum House, Pepperell House) have sashes with distinctive wide mullions in the form of fluted columns. A number of later 20th-century buildings have metal sash windows of traditional proportions, though their excessively thin frames look unsatisfactory. Crittall-type metal windows were widely used in buildings erected between the Wars and after the 2nd World War e.g. The Arcade *(Fig. 43)*. Such windows were invariably well designed and fit satisfactorily with the conservation area: they should be retained and preserved where possible.

Some of the modern High Street buildings have glass and panel curtain walls, or are of concrete, materials that look alien in this context though their effect is minimised if they have been carefully treated and designed, and the scale and form of the building respects their context.

Building refurbishment in the last 30 years or so has seen the use of unsympathetic materials, notably concrete roof tiles for slates and UPVC joinery to replace timber windows and doors. In the conservation area, the presence of such materials is still limited, perhaps because maintenance is generally not good.

Boundaries are mainly brick walls with hedges. The good quality railings round the cathedral and school in Ingrave Road are a distinctive feature of the area. The High Street and part of St. Thomas Road have been surfaced with block paving. Small concrete paving slabs are used in Shenfield Road and Ingrave Road. The side road pavements are mainly surfaced in asphalt.

9. USES OF BUILDINGS

Uses of buildings are shown in a simplified way on *Fig. 16*. On a map of this sort, a variety of different colours indicates a healthy settlement reflecting a mixture of uses, which in turn make for a lively and interesting built environment. Extensive monochrome areas risk becoming dull and featureless, though if the buildings are of differing dates (cf. *Fig. 6*) this will help to create variety. The map also shows green spaces and pedestrian routes.

Uses have a significant effect on the character of the conservation area. The western part has a high incidence of community, educational and religious buildings, which are generally of a high quality and tend to be sited within spacious grounds.

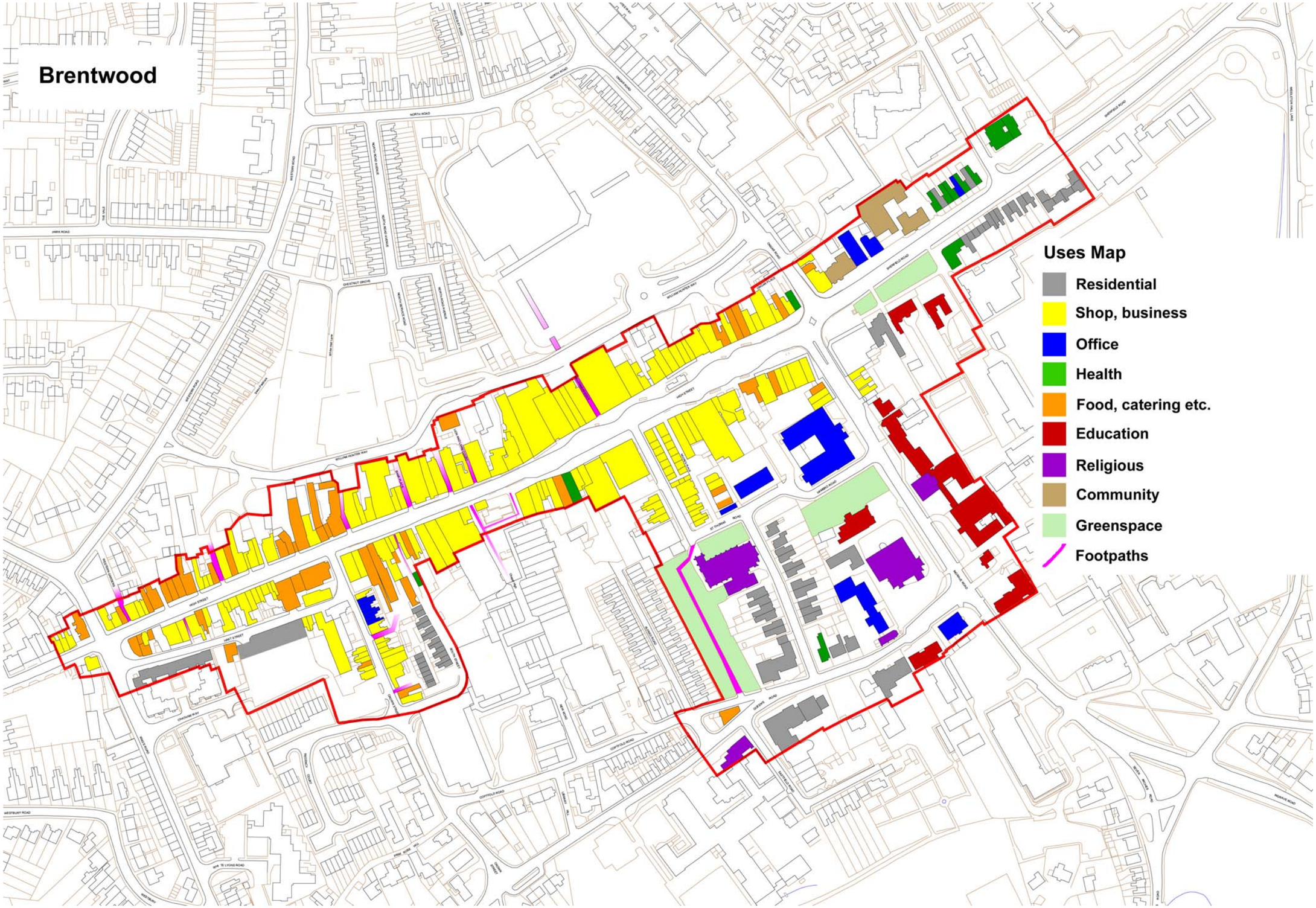

Fig. 16 Map showing the uses of buildings in the conservation area

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The High Street, in accordance with the classing of the town as a Principal Shopping Centre, is almost entirely retail or food use. Most of the shops are branches of multiples, which tend to occupy large premises. Small individual shops are mostly to be found in the side streets on the south side, particularly Crown Street. Despite the almost total loss of traditional pubs in the High Street, there has been a remarkable proliferation of bars and food shops at its eastern end. These outlets often have quite good frontages, which are sometimes an improvement to the modern buildings in which they are located.

10. AREA ANALYSIS

Although Brentwood Borough still has extensive woodlands in the Country Parks at Weald and Thorndon, and parts of the Borough are still very rural thanks to the Green Belt, the town and the conservation area have a suburban hinterland, comprising ribbon and satellite development along the line of the old A12. The junctions of the old A12 with the Ingrave and Ongar Roads, and with Kings Road and Weald Road, form well defined boundaries between the High Street and the surrounding suburbia. There is thus a contrast between that part of the conservation area, the bulk of it, in the High Street, and the peripheral suburban areas.

The Area Analysis begins at the east with the suburban Shenfield and Ingrave Roads, and proceeds west along the High Street and the neighbouring roads.

SHENFIELD ROAD

The approach to the conservation area is along a wide road lined with trees and buildings well spaced apart. The entrance to it is heralded by notable buildings on either side of the road, Tile House and Shen Almhouses. **Tile House (no. 33)** is a double pile building, the brickwork of which has flared headers suggestive of an 18th-century origin though its front has been remodelled in the 19th or 20th centuries. It is now a doctors' surgery, for which purpose it has been provided with a sympathetic modern extension on the right hand side. Unfortunately the flank elevation to Sawyers Hall Lane is spoiled by skips and bins, decayed fencing, and self-sown trees, whilst there is extensive parking to the front. The latter may be unavoidable, though it could be softened by hedging or trees, but the former is inexcusable.

Shen Almhouses (1910, grade II listed) are a single storey complex on an H-plan, red brick with decorated rendered gables with richly carved bargeboards, and a forest of tall chimneys with moulded shafts. The windows are heavy wooden casements with leaded lights. The picturesque aspect of the almshouses is enhanced by the front gardens planted with parterres of yew and box hedging with cherry trees, and the boundary wall of knapped flint, also grade II listed.

Tile House, the almshouses, and other old buildings in Shenfield Road, notably Mitre House, Newnum House and Roden House, almost certainly represent old frontage lines to the Roman and medieval road which has progressively been encroached upon.

On both sides of the road there follow terraces of Victorian housing, albeit quite different in type. **Nos 17-31** on the north side (*Fig. 17*) are solid late Victorian, with canted bays with white painted stucco window and door surrounds. But only two are still dwellings; the rest have undergone change of use to businesses, mainly healthcare of various sorts.

Although they still have slate roofs, and most of the windows have survived (only two have replacement ones), proliferation of signage and loss of front gardens to parking have had an adverse effect on their character. Car parking encroaches on the pavements and is a hazard to pedestrians.

Fig. 17 Nos 17-31 Shenfield Road.

On the south side of the road, there are two stock brick semi-detached pairs, **nos 26-28** and **30-32**, with canted ground floor bays, and sawtooth string courses, but all with UPVC windows, though the doors are still original. The low brick garden walls once had railings. **Rustic Terrace, nos 20-24** (1889) is also of stocks, but the ground floors have been clumsily extended out to the frontage with flat-roofed rectangular bays with UPVC windows. The gardens are bounded by privet and holly hedges.

To the west are late 20th-century buildings, **Rustic Cottages nos 16-18**, a very plain inoffensive infill development of the 1980s or 1990s, weatherboarded in acknowledgement of a once common material now all but absent from the town centre. Brunvic Lodge is a gabled house of Victorian origin, also weatherboarded, the boarding curiously set diagonally at the ground floor, and with a black painted timber arch within the gable. Another modern development is the adjacent surgery building at the edge of the 'green' in front of Mitre House, an interesting design with a jetty curiously supported on cast iron columns, a rounded corner, and a disproportionately small cupola with a clock. The rather bright polychromatic red and yellow brick appears somewhat alien in this context.

There follow three old detached listed houses now the property of Brentwood School. They are all set back from the road and the grass in front of them gives the impression of their being located on a village green. The treatment of this grassed area is important in preserving this setting: often enclosed by chains on low posts, in places there are also less suitable white painted concrete bollards to deter parking. It is important that it is kept free from litter. **Mitre House** stands about 30m back from the road edge, is 15th-century in origin, but remodelled and rendered with false timber framing (*Fig. 18*). Because of the rarity of buildings of this appearance, it is a particularly distinctive feature of the approach to the town. To the left is a driveway through handsome early 19th-century grade II listed wrought iron gates to modern flat-roofed single storey outbuildings belonging to the School. The gates would benefit from conservation.

Fig. 18 Mitre House.

Roden House and **Newnum House** are 18th-century houses sharing a common frontage line about 20m back from the road. Both have brickwork with flared headers. Roden House (grade II*) is large, seven window bay, with dutch gables, hoppers dated 1724, and a fine doorcase. The boundary wall on the east side of Roden House is grade II listed. Newnum House is smaller, with a rendered gable with a Venetian window, a modillion eaves cornice, and with a link building on its right hand side with a continuous frieze of sash windows at both floors. Its fabric incorporates a timber-framed building of *c.*1600.

At the junction with Ingrave Road is **Wilsons Corner**, a former department store rebuilt after a fire in 1909, three storeys high, brick with stone dressings, feature gables and a clock tower which makes it a landmark in long views from east and west. A furniture store since 1978, the building has been empty since 2003. The shop fronts have been modernised, and also not improved by the construction of a flat canopy of considerable projection. In front of the building is an asphalt car park with steel and white painted concrete bollards, enclosed by low walls with shrub planting. This area needs landscaping, and the skips and litter removed. It certainly does not provide a suitable setting for the polished granite obelisk which is the memorial (1861) to the Protestant martyr William Hunter, and which is located at the junction of the asphalt and greensward (*Fig. 19*).

Fig. 19 Wilsons Corner and the William Hunter monument.

On the north side, the **Hermitage** is a grade II listed brick early 18th-century house of five window bays, extended on the right hand side. The pointing was originally penny struck. The windows are tripartite sashes, all modern replacements. The porch looks rebuilt (*Fig. 20*). The evergreen hedge round the front of the building contrasts well with the red brick and creates a setting for it. The house was formerly part of Brentwood School and is now an Essex County Council community centre. It has modern additions to the rear, where there is extensive asphalt and block paving, parked cars, bins, bollards, and only a little planting. This does nothing for the setting of the listed building, and cannot constitute an attractive space for those who use it.

Fig. 20 The Hermitage.

Behind the Hermitage, and barely glimpsed from Shenfield Road, is **Brentwood Theatre**, a yellow industrial style building completed in 1993. Access to the backland space on the east side of the Hermitage is barred by blue metal fencing and a red and white lifting barrier, with views beyond of tarmac and parked cars (*Fig. 21*). All this area needs rethinking and landscaping with a careful attention to detail. More conspicuous than the theatre is the tall BT building, an ugly block which looms over this part of the conservation area, though itself outside the conservation area boundary. It is ubiquitous in views in this part of the town, a malign presence which does not encourage good design or landscaping.

Fig. 21 Unsatisfactory approach to Brentwood Theatre down the side of the Hermitage.

West of the Hermitage is the NHS and Essex CC **Connexions youth centre** housed in a modern brick building of one and two storeys, with flat roofs and metal sash windows, some now replaced in UPVC. It is concealed from the street by an old high brick wall, immediately behind which is a sad rectangular patch of lawn in need of some surrounding planting. Against the brick wall is a listed milestone now illegible.

Landon House and **Burntwood House** (*Fig. 22*) are neo-Georgian style 'houses' built for use as offices, and replacing older buildings on the site. They were clearly designed to complement the older buildings in Shenfield Road, which they do quite successfully, even though Burntwood House has been remodelled with a full three storey rear extension terminating in a large garage. Landon House has an attractive old garage behind it, evocative of a lost age of motoring. The pavement in front of these buildings is wide, and as elsewhere in Shenfield Road, made of small square concrete slabs. The cast iron bollards in the pavement presumably mark the property boundaries, but serve to delimit an area of parking which is visually obtrusive and potentially obstructive to pedestrians.

Fig. 22 Burntwood House and the creeper enveloped Old House beyond. Parked cars do not enhance the street scene.

Old House, documented from 1748, is brick with flared headers, and grade II* listed. It is shrouded in creeper, long a feature of the house but which should be stopped from getting into the parapets, eaves and rainwater goods where it could be damaging. A single storey canted bay has been added to the left of the front door; the full height bow-fronted bay to the right of it is also probably an addition. On the east side there is a long six window bay unit, originally a separate building and incorporating timber-framing of the 16th century. Like other Georgian buildings in this area, it was formerly part of Brentwood School. Since 1973, it has been an Arts and Community Centre run by Brentwood Council, and as such is very busy and well used. The flowerbed by the front door needs better edging and more attention. The signs attached to the building and the free-standing board in front of it are not adequate for a building of this quality.

The corner of Shenfield Road and Ongar Road is occupied by a 19th-century building with shops at the ground floor and a white-painted stuccoed first floor. On Shenfield Road it presents a neat well maintained appearance, with a good wooden shop front, but it deteriorates dramatically down Ongar Road where the shops have unsympathetic signage, maintenance is poor and there are UPVC windows at the first floor (*Fig. 23*).

Fig. 23 Bad shop fronts in Ongar Road at the junction with Shenfield Road.

ONGAR ROAD

Only the southern end of Ongar Road is in the conservation area. It does not form an attractive entrance to it. The Shenfield Road side leaves much to be desired as has been seen. On the corner with the High Street, there is a view of the rear of the tall Victorian buildings (nos 1-23) containing a row of shops. It is cluttered with fire escapes, service ducts and single storey flat-roofed extensions, and dominated by a huge concrete framed addition to the back of the Joscelynes store.

THE WILSONS CORNER JUNCTION

Signage at this busy junction is excessive. The road direction and roundabout signs here are duplicated, and not helped by overhead wires and utilitarian street lamps (*Fig. 24*). Rationalisation and improvement of these features would enhance the appearance of this busy junction which is the dominant feature of the western approach to the High Street.

Fig. 24 Excessive road signs and overhead wire at the approach to the Wilsons Corner junction.

INGRAVE ROAD

Like Shenfield Road, the Ingrave Road is characterised by large buildings mostly widely spaced apart, with mature trees. To that part within the conservation area, there is little more than Wilsons Corner, Brentwood School, the large office block Mellon (formerly Hambro) House, and the Roman Catholic cathedral. As important as these buildings, all of good quality, are the spaces between them, which help endow the road with a dignity and spaciousness reminiscent, say, of a university or cathedral city.

South of Wilsons Corner, the east side of the road is occupied by the School buildings which present a range of architectural styles, from Georgian to Tudor to neo-Gothic and neo-Tudor. The unifying factors between them is the use of red brick and a general largeness of scale. The older school buildings are set back from the frontage behind greensward and trees. The early 20th-century part of the school further down the road are also set back from the road, but in grounds now mostly asphalted and used for parking. They are enclosed by railings with gilded urns on the main posts. Similar railings enclose the cathedral precinct, the southern part of which is an asphalt car park whereas the north is a burial ground with many trees. Mellon House has a newly landscaped area in front of it, with an elegant curved stainless steel bench and planting.

Barnards is a compact handsome five window bay Georgian house with an area in front of it for cellars (*Fig. 25*). It has been part of the School since the early 20th century. Next to it is **Old School House**, a similar Georgian building dated 1773, with a projecting bay added 1864. Both have modillion cornices below parapets, and tiled roofs. This is linked by a gabled block of 1926 to the **Big Old School**, of 16th-century Tudor brick at the ground floor with an upper floor dormitory added 1855, plain with Tudor style windows in stone surrounds. This forms a long range parallel to the road and terminated by the **school chapel** (1868) at right angles to it which projects right out to the boundary with the pavement. It is in a rather severe Early English style with lancet windows with Bath stone surrounds, the brickwork only marginally relieved by bands of black engineering brick.

Fig. 25 Barnards, a Georgian house used by Brentwood School.

Fig. 26 Main school building, Brentwood School, by Frederic Chancellor.

The **main school building** (1910) by the eminent Essex architect Frederic Chancellor follows, a long tall block in a Tudor style with rows of gables, and a central gatehouse tower, its most conspicuous feature, with Renaissance detailed stonework at the ground floor and somewhat cumbersome above, where it terminates with a clock and a cupola (*Fig. 26*). A pretty covered arched passage on its left hand side links it to the older buildings. It is a shame that it is surrounded today by car parking, which is particularly intrusive on the north side by the chapel.

Next to the main school is a single storey **lodge (no. 17)** a pretty little cottage also in red brick and a similar architectural style, currently largely invisible behind a hedge of high shrubs.

Beyond the Lodge, a secondary 'tradesman's' entrance to the school, with rather utilitarian railings between box section posts does not maintain the high standard of the previous boundary treatment. One of the brick piers has lost its capping. **Otway House** (1878) is a Victorian gothic brick building, originally the vicarage for the parish church, but later acquired by the school, and provided with a long extension at right angles out to the frontage in 1926, in plain nicely detailed red brick with sash windows. The boundary wall of the former vicarage is distinctive, of panels in reds and stocks perforated with lozenge-shaped openings.

On the west side of Ingrave Road, **Regency House** (no. 38, listed grade II), a former bishop's residence, stands on the corner with Queen's Road. It is very imposing, with a three bay façade in stock brick originally with tuck pointing, and white painted stucco giant pilasters and surrounds to the very large sash windows. The plastic paint on the stucco is likely to cause damage to the fabric in the long term by trapping damp. The current office use has surrounded it with asphalt and parked cars.

The **Roman Catholic cathedral precinct** occupies the block of land between Queens Road and Cathedral Place. Like Brentwood School, the buildings represent a wide range of architectural styles, but they are sufficiently distinct and well designed to hold their own against each other, and the spaces are ample enough to accommodate them. The Brentwood Diocese has been to pains to ensure that the new ones are all to a high standard of design. It is curious that only one building is listed.

The **cathedral** is the dominant feature and a major landmark. It is a collision between Quinlan Terry's neo-classical building of 1990 (*Fig. 27*) and the earlier gothic church of 1861. Somehow, and perhaps fortunately, the earlier church has been so dwarfed by the new building that it has become inconspicuous, with the exception of its spire. The new building acknowledges the old in being built of rough-faced Kentish Ragstone, a rather curious choice for a classical building, though the clearstorey is of stock brick. After the cathedral, the main contribution to the street scene is the good quality railings with their gilded urns which surround the precinct and are modelled on those of the School opposite. However, the surrounding buildings are all notable. The **original Catholic church** (1837), a Tudor gothic building in white brick with polygonal corner turrets,

Fig. 27 Brentwood cathedral by Quinlan Terry.

now used as a pre-school, presents its gable end to the Ingrave Road (*Fig. 28*). It is grade II, a 1999 addition to the Brentwood list. Set further back into the site is **Clergy House**, in the same architectural style and also in white brick, with a picturesque eaves fascia and bargeboards. West of the cathedral, there is a north-south row of buildings, comprising offices (1982) designed by Lawrence King to harmonise with the gothic style of a former convent built in 1873 of Kentish Ragstone, the two being linked by a very nicely detailed neo-classical block. To the south, its lancet windows forming a very good elevation on Queens Road, is the **Song School**, a Victorian stock brick building originally a chapel, with a recent extension faithfully in the same style.

Fig. 28 The original Catholic church of 1837 built of white brick.

The spaces round the buildings are very important in contributing to their setting. The area adjacent to the cathedral has high quality York stone paving and granite sets. South of it, however, there is a large area of asphalt used as a car park with a dying conifer and, marooned in the middle of it, a depressed-looking Scots Pine (*Fig. 29*). Hedging should be planted behind the railings to improve the view from the road, and a setting should be provided for the tree. The tree preservation order map suggests that trees have been lost here; they should be replaced. The **graveyard** north of the cathedral on Cathedral Place is one of the few green spaces in the conservation area. It is too small a space to accommodate the large number of young trees growing there, and would benefit from active landscape management.

Fig. 29 The southern part of the cathedral precinct needs improving by better hard and soft landscaping.

The spire of St. Thomas church can be seen down **Cathedral Place**, a good view which complements the ecclesiastical character of the area but which is compromised by Becket House in the distance. The corner of Cathedral Place and Ingrave Road is occupied by **Mellon House** (formerly Hambro House), a very large office block in red brick with pigmented mortar, two-and-a-half storey, with a mansard concealing a flat roof. There is sufficient variety in its elevations, and attention to detail in its design, for it to sit comfortably in its surroundings. (Unfortunately the windows have been replaced in

UPVC). Although landscaping on Ingrave Road is good, and it has internal and underground car parking, to the rear on **Cathedral Place**, there is parking which has sprawled over on to adjacent land where there are unsympathetic boundary treatments (chains and chain link fencing). There is scope for tidying up the space between Mellon House and the similarly styled smaller office building (Berkeley House) behind it used by Wortley Byers. The car park which occupies the bend in Cathedral Place, on the corner with St. Thomas Road is particularly bad, with yellow rising barriers, a plethora of signs, and scruffy planting. This is a space which could be improved by development.

Architectural quality deteriorates with proximity to the High Street. North of Mellon House are three shops **(nos 2-6)**, brick but concrete framed, flat-roofed, with reasonable shop fronts below a thin concrete canopy, but a grim first floor with a continuous clearstorey window.

THE HIGH STREET

This is the largest single constituent part of the conservation area, and the most significant. However, it does not fulfil the promise suggested by Shenfield Road: it is not the main street of a Georgian market town, but lies at the heart of a busy 20th-century one with an overwhelmingly retail function. Of Roman origin, the High Street is very long and straight. The blandness of the long views are relieved by the irregular frontages and building heights, the narrowing at the west end which adds emphasis to the perspective effect, and the clock tower at Wilsons Corner at the east end. There is no such feature at the west end where the ground drops down steeply just beyond the conservation area boundary.

At its east end, the High Street is 30-40m wide, and preserves something of the spacious feel of the Shenfield Road. There is a pinch point at about St. Thomas chapel, beyond which the road narrows. This must be partly the result of encroachment on the frontage by stallholders and shopkeepers which must have been more intense at this commercial end of the town where the market was located. Commercial pressure on the frontage will have been particularly acute where market infill occurred in the Hart Street area. There may well be other historical reasons behind this narrowing of the road: it is tempting to speculate that this was the area of the initial planned town founded by St. Osyth.

There is no unifying architectural style in the High Street. In the 19th century, it mainly comprised rendered timber-framed buildings, or brick fronted buildings, of two storeys, with sash windows and traditional shop fronts (cf. *Fig. 7)*. The 20th century has done violence to that simple repertoire of architectural styles, many of the smaller and more modest old buildings being demolished. The inter-War years have contributed shopping parade type developments with formal elevations, parapets with low-pitched roofs, and metal windows, whilst the period since the 2nd World War has seen large, often three-storey, developments built of modern materials quite alien to the pre-existing character of the High Street. In the central part of the High Street, modern rebuilding has brought a degree of unity, though little of architectural merit. On the north side, from nos 39-41 (Monsoon) to Boots, the buildings are all three storey with flat facades. Similarly, on the south side from the post office to the former Burtons, the buildings are all modern though mostly two storey. Further west, the High Street is much more architecturally varied.

There is a contrast between the north and south sides of the High Street. To the south, a pattern of streets has developed at right angles to it, stimulated originally by the presence

of the railway station. The accompanying commercial activity and suburban housing complement it and seem to represent a natural development of it. On the north side, however, there is a sharp boundary formed by the new William Hunter Way which runs along the back of the plots to the rear of the High Street buildings.

Maintenance is generally low in the High Street, with a seriously adverse effect on its character. Good maintenance can help a mixture of not always complementary architectural styles blend together relatively successfully. Modern buildings of the 1960s and 1970s, which in terms of design and materials can seem alien in historic town centres, look much worse if they are shabby and unloved. Billericay is an example of a town where good maintenance redeems to a degree the alien character of such buildings.

In the mid 1990s, a street enhancement scheme was carried out. The pavements were repaved with dark red concrete pavers. In the wide eastern end of the street, the road edge undulates to accommodate parking bays for bus stops and taxis, and there are irregular shaped brick planters and seats. This wider end of the street also benefits from the presence of several trees, notably planes, which make a huge contribution to creating pleasant spaces, one which will increase as they get older and bigger. Compared with enhancement schemes elsewhere, this was a simple one, in many ways a virtue as over-elaborately designed ones can easily look busy and fussy. However, the paving is now looking tired and in need of attention (*Fig. 30*). The lamp standards are of a basic utilitarian design (though more attractive ones better suited to the conservation area have been used in some side streets) as are protective railings at pavement edges.

Fig. 30 The block paving in the High Street needs refreshing.

The descriptions of the High Street proceed from east to west.

HIGH STREET, NORTH SIDE

A three-storey terrace (**nos 1-23**) today containing eight shops on the corner with Ongar Road dating from 1883 forms one of the more imposing features of the High Street (*Fig. 31*). It is built of stock brick with moulded red bricks used for window dressings and other details. The shop fronts are mostly unsympathetic to the character of the building and present a contrast with its upper storeys, where four of them have replacement windows and the others need redecoration. In this context, Joscelynes, with its individually designed shop front and projecting canopy, looks alien rather than stylish. The best shop front is Caffé Uno which is traditional in style, though the colour of the lime green fascia is unfortunate.

Fig. 31 Nos 1-23 High Street, dating from 1883. The plane tree makes a major contribution to the street scene, even in winter.

Halfords (**no. 25**) is an ugly late 20th-century remodelling of a three-storey stock brick building which has been clad in lead. Next occupies three shops, first an old building refronted in yellow brick and then a pair dating from the 1950s or 1960s, of brick at the first floor and flat roofed. The restrained style of the shop fronts and the signage highlights the poor quality of the neighbouring shops. There follows a row of three shops (**nos 33a-b**) in a post-War building with a façade made of rusticated reconstituted stone and windows with concrete reveals (*Fig. 32*). This would be almost elegant if the use of simulated stone were not so unexpected.

Fig. 32 No. 33 High Street and the public conveniences.

As well as a vast plane tree with seats beneath it, the wide pavement here accommodates the **public lavatories**, set partially underground and enclosed by a red stock-type brick wall with low railings above it (*Fig. 33*). They have been carefully designed to make them relatively unobtrusive in the street scene, and they are particularly well screened from the roadway by shrub planting. However, their appearance would be improved with better quality signs, and by the replacement of the roofing felt and of the polycarbonate rooflights with more attractive materials.

Fig. 33 Nos 43-45 High Street (Marks and Spencer), and beyond nos 47-49.

Thomas Cook (**no. 35**) is a long glazed shop front full of advertisements, which is totally unrelated to the symmetrically designed stock brick first floor with its Crittall windows. This is a 20th-century refronting of an older building. A carriage arch leads through to a yard with old outbuildings, one probably a stable, These are a rare survival in the High Street and the space preserves something of its former backland character, though there is an indifferent view through to a metal gate and the supermarket car park beyond.

No. 37 (Cardfair) is a low building with a brick façade with a parapet to the roof and Crittall windows. **Nos 39-41** (Monsoon) is three storey, its upper storeys a glass and panel curtain wall recessed behind the line of the main elevation, the right hand side solid and decorated with an abstract 1950s style pattern. Interesting of its kind, it seems very alien to the High Street, even to the large Marks and Spencer store (nos **43-45**, originally built for Woolworths in 1969), a coherent unified design with a curtain wall interrupted at each window by vertical brise soleil panels (*Fig. 33*). It is however desperately in need of decoration.

Millennium Walk has been paved and landscaped as the main pedestrian thoroughfare from the High Street to the supermarket and its car park. It is a tunnel-like space between the monolithic featureless side of Marks and Spencer and the rather more appealing flank of Lloyds TSB which is lower in scale and has a regular pattern of windows. Weather protection is provided by pitched roofs perched uncomfortably on stilts forming canopies which do not really relate to their surroundings, were that possible. On the pavement in the High Street is the Millennium Clock, a welcome addition to the street scene but it stands on insubstantial spindly legs to which an advertising panel is fixed.

Nos 47 is a an eight window bay building, the central three windows breaking forward from the main elevation and the middle one in stone with a second floor balcony, with a low pediment above (*Fig. 33*). The outer window bays have decorative herringbone brickwork. The windows have aluminium sashes. It is all rather elegant, presumably built as one store but now three units (Lloyds TSB, Clarks and Clintons). The polished granite front of the bank contrasts favourably with the large areas of glazing of the others.

Fig. 34 Nos 63-65, one of the few surviving medieval buildings in the High Street, and beyond it the former Lion and Lamb, and nos 69-71.

No. 49 (Superdrug) is a three storey post-War building, a long clearstorey window at first floor relating well to the shop front, with six individual metal windows at the first floor.

No. 51, Boots, is a long three-storey building faced in prefabricated concrete panels with a grey grit finish similar to the building west of St. Thomas chapel. The shop front is in three parts separated by tile-covered piers, mirroring the three wide arches over the balcony at the second floor. The building is slightly oblique to the frontage line as the High Street begins to become narrower west of this point.

To the west of Boots, there is a good stretch of traditional High Street buildings as far as no. 71. **Nos 53-55** (Edinburgh Woollen Mill) has a traditional style shop front below a stock brick elevation which preserves its original sash windows. **Nos 57-61** is red brick at the first floor with metal windows in timber frames, with a jettied rendered gable above. It is a potentially good building but maintenance is poor, and the shop front has a disproportionately large fascia.

Nos 63-65, listed grade II, are one of the few surviving late medieval buildings in the High Street. They are a rather unconvincing composition since rebuilding in 1973, with a central gable flanked by ranges either side parallel to the street, that to the east having a parapet to its pitched roof (*Figs 8 & 34*). The cross-wing is the oldest part, 15th-century, of two bays, with a crown-post roof, originally jettied, later extended by two bays to the north in the 17th century (Scott 1984). To the east, there was originally an open hall, replaced with the existing two-storey building (no. 63) in the 17th century. The timber-framed construction can be seen within the shop at no. 65. The first floor windows are rectangular holes in plain wooden frames and do little to complement the building.

The former **Lion and Lamb**, now WH Smith, is an old inn nicely refurbished between the wars with a façade of hand made red bricks. The rear is of stock brick, and it has a slate covered gambrel roof, features that identify it as incorporating old fabric. It is of three window bays, the central one with an oriel above a wide round arch now opened up for shop window display, flanked by matching bays within stone surrounds with wooden mullion and transom windows over round arched doors. At the eaves there are decorated lead gutters. This strongly detailed and symmetrical façade, one of the most attractive in the High Street, has survived the change of use to a shop, though it suffers from excessive advertising in the windows.

Lion and Lamb Court is one of the better alleyways off the High Street. A new stock brick building with good detailing (red brick window arches, eaves dentil course, stone quoins and string course) has been built on to the rear of the Lion and Lamb, whilst the view to the north is closed by another new stock brick building (Imperial Peking). The alley is surfaced with block pavers and lit by modern lamps of sympathetic design (*Fig. 35*).

Fig. 35 Lion and Lamb court. Careful new design and attention to detail have made this an attractive alleyway.

No. 69 is a three-storey Victorian building in the italianate style, with strongly projecting eaves, rusticated quoins and raised brick surrounds to round-arched windows with key stones, its stock brickwork being painted white, a treatment surprisingly successful. It is well complemented by the plain black Waterstones fascia. **No. 71** is similarly imposing, of much the same date, built of red brick with detailing in stocks, but the sash windows have been replaced in UPVC and the bright red Currys fascia is an eyesore (*Fig. 34*).

Nos 73-73a (Rosebys and Krisp) are a four window bay inter-War shopping parade development, two storey with a flat roof, rendered with rusticated quoining. The black painted wooden window frames are a nice contrast with the white render. It is slightly set back, presumably to an old frontage line, but the Rosebys shop front projects forward in a clumsy way to the line of the adjacent **Barclays bank,** a hideous modern building, despite a potentially interesting attempt at a ground floor portico, constructed of grey concrete bricks with a grimy glazed curtain wall above. The unattractive brickwork and curtain wall continue round the side into **Bank Place** where there are views of the car park in William Hunter Way (*Fig. 36*).

Fig. 36 Bank Place, an alleyway where good paving and lamps do not compensate for the view of the car park beyond, and where parked cars have intruded into what should be a pedestrian space.

Nos 77-79 is of stocks, three storey, a parapet to the roof, the windows with stone lintels with their sashes intact (*Fig. 37*). Like Currys, it has an unfortunate over-large bright red fascia (Britannia Building Society).

Nos 81-85 (MT) is an inter-War shopping parade development, built of some form of concrete or reconstituted stone block, with a stepped parapet rising in the middle, and metal windows with a strong horizontal emphasis. Quite a good quality building of its kind, it represents an isolated moment in this part of the High Street (*Fig. 37*).

Fig. 37 HSBC bank, and beyond no. 87, nos 81-85, nos 77-79, and no. 73.

No. 87 is a three storey building, 19th-century or earlier but its façade rebuilt in red brick in the 20th century. The sash windows were not provided with lintels and their frames are in UPVC. **No. 89** is two-storey, with a brick façade which seems to have been rebuilt in the 20th century. Its sashes have been replaced with inappropriate timber windows. A curious visually interesting feature is an old weatherboarded attic extension.

HSBC, a former Midland Bank branch erected in 1921, is a well preserved bank building with a typically grand classical presence on the frontage, the ground floor with rusticated stonework and four Doric columns, red brick above with sash windows (*Fig. 37*). The cash dispenser and disabled access have been carefully located in the side alley, leaving the front unmutilated. The alley is enclosed by a long flat-roofed extension to the rear of HSBC and the tall white painted rendered flank wall of the White Hart, largely featureless except for down pipes, soil pipes and prominent service ducting. Views down it, of a car park enclosed by a fletton brick wall, are not enhanced by litter or the clumsy white railings of the ramp to the bank entrance.

The grade II* **White Hart**, now the Sugar Hut, is a forlorn reminder of the Brentwood's significance as a coaching town (*Fig. 38*). The Georgian brickwork of the three-storey façade was totally replaced in the same style in the 20th century. The new use as a club is unlikely to be sympathetic to its historic character. The remarkable feature of the building, which explains its II* status, is the timber-framed galleried range of *c*.1500 on the west side of the courtyard to the rear (*Fig. 9*). At the first floor, there were a series of two-bay rooms with crown-post roofs. Some internal wall painting survives. This is a rare and very complete survival of a type of building formerly characteristic of late medieval inns. To the rear, facing William Hunter Way, the galleried range has a few exposed timbers which are becoming eroded because of adjacent cement render. There is also an untidy service yard enclosed by a painted blockwork wall.

Fig. 38 The former White Hart, now the Sugar Hut

Nos **95-97** (Robert Dyas) is a sad modern building, its first floor of grey concrete bricks with a long clearstorey window now in UPVC. **No. 99** has a 19th-century façade with sash windows, now in metal frames, with keystones, and a stucco cornice below the parapet. The shop front has in a former use been clad in an elegant stone veneer, but this is totally overwhelmed by the garish McDonalds signage. **No. 101** is a recent development which has recreated the look of a late medieval building with two gables facing the street. At the ground floor, there is a traditional style shop front. **Nos 103-105** have 19th-century stock brick facades with sash windows and parapets. West of them is an alley full of skips *(Fig. 39*).

Fig. 39 Alleyway with skips between nos 105 and 107 High Street.

No.107 is a narrow modest 19th-century brick building of a type which must once have been much more common in the High Street. **No. 109** is a wide two-storey 19th-century building, the stock bricks unfortunately painted, with stucco surrounds to the windows, and a low hipped roof with two dormer windows with replacement frames. A carriage arch with its nice original surround is a striking feature of the building, except that it affords a view of parked cars. The shop front and sign do not complement what could be a handsome building. HiSpek has a stucco first floor with replacement windows, and an unsympathetic shop sign.

Nos 113-115 are a three-storey post-War block in brick with clearstorey metal windows. It is an ugly uncompromising building, not assisted by Domino's shop front. Its concrete framed side elevation and single storey rear extension, with a water tank and air conditioning units on its flat roof, flank the alley to the west where the gables of some newly erected buildings form an interesting view.

No. 117 (Chutney Joe) is a double pile 19th-century or earlier building, its brick front rendered and cream painted, with mahogany effect UPVC windows (*Fig. 40*). To the rear there is a row of somewhat ramshackle outbuildings. Such buildings are typical of backland spaces and contribute to their character but now are rare in Brentwood. **Nos 119a-121** are are probably a 1950s refacing of older buildings, with a parapet and Crittall windows. Kino has a well balanced shop front, with a central shop sign over a central door.

Fig. 40 No. 117 High Street, with outbuildings to the rear.

The Swan is one of the two surviving High Street public houses, rebuilt 1935 in handmade brick with flared headers. The well balanced façade has good detailing to the plinth and pilasters, and stucco window surrounds. The signage is just about under control.

Nos 125-127b, the Litten Tree, has a quite acceptable wooden shop front within polished granite pilasters inherited from a previous use, but the upper two storeys are an uncompromisingly modern glass and panel curtain wall.

Nos 129-129a (Prezzo), listed grade II, has a traditional shop front set in an impressive early 19th-century brick façade, with rubbed brick capitals to full height corner pilasters and a rubbed brick cornice to the parapet (*Fig. 41*). The sash windows have gauged brick arches. Ornamental brickwork of this quality is rare in the town. However, the brickwork is in poor condition and there are four tie bars. It is a casing on an earlier timber frame. To the rear there is a weatherboarded outbuilding and a yard with skips.

Fig. 41 Nos 129-129a High Street, late 18th-century brickwork with classical detailing encasing an older timber frame.

Nos 131a-131b is a brick fronted Victorian building, now rendered, with UPVC windows, and a reasonable if sombre shop front. Air conditioning units and skips are a visual intrusion in the alley down the side which looks through to housing in Western Gardens.

No. 133 is a plain Victorian building with painted brickwork and a bad shop front (Baguettes and Bagels). **Nos 135-137** is a large brick block probably built between the Wars or just after, plain but three storey and tending to dominate its surroundings. In view of its prominent corner position, its appearance would be improved if the UPVC windows were replaced in timber, and a better shop front substituted at no. 135.

The **Sir Charles Napier** on the corner with Weald Road is another well detailed public house dating from the inter-War years (*Fig. 42*). It is built of hand made brick, with false half timbering at the first floor and in the gables, and timber casements with leaded lights. On the west side are good wrought iron gates to an untidy yard.

Fig. 42 The Sir Charles Napier and nos 143-147 High Street.

Nos 143-147 at the conservation area boundary are an interesting and potentially distinguished Georgian brick buildings badly treated (*Fig. 42*). It has round arched windows to the first floor with distinctive glazing bars, but the bottom half of the sashes have been replaced in UPVC. No. 147 has its brickwork now painted. The door to the upper floors is of a design inappropriate to the building. The shop fascias do not fit with the architecture, and the brickwork of no. 143 has been removed at ground floor corner and replaced with a spindly looking iron column.

WILLIAM HUNTER WAY

The yards and spaces to the north of the High Street are mostly unattractive and used for car parking. Although mostly outside the conservation area, they form its boundary and figure in views down the alleyways from the High Street. Policies in the Local Plan encouraging the development of a frontage on William Hunter Way have not so far been very successful. The area between Lion and Lamb Court and Bank Place, which is in the conservation area (*Fig. 73)*, has been landscaped but not entirely satisfactorily, and together with the whole street could do with further attention.

HIGH STREET, SOUTH SIDE

A large red brick development with eight shops (**nos 2-8**), two storey except for the central part which is three, fills the corner with Ingrave Road. In its way, with its use of traditional materials and sash windows, it attempts to complement the 1883 buildings on the other side of the street, but it is quite different in character. A granite horse trough and drinking fountain on the pavement here is a surviving traditional feature of street furniture.

A former public house, recognisable from its style of architecture, early 20th-century, with brick ground floor and rendered first, and two doors each with handsome door cases and magnificent suspended lanterns above them, is now a Kentucky Fried Chicken. The building has just about survived the change of use, though the corporate signage does nothing for it.

No. 12, now the Halifax, is a grade II listed Georgian house, two-and-a-half storey with a gambrel roof behind a parapet with a stucco cornice, five window bays, and a porch on Doric columns. The ground-floor windows have wrought iron railings in front of them, presumably originally for window boxes. Formerly there was an area; the tops of the blocked cellar windows are visible. This is one of only three surviving Georgian buildings in the High Street and an important feature of it, forming a group with the former pub next door. Its rear elevation is not so good: windows have been replaced and enlarged, and there is a large extension crowned with numerous air conditioning units.

Late 20th-century buildings, a single storey infill shop (Kodak Express) and then three shops below a ribbed concrete first floor elevation in an ugly block in pale yellow brick which extends an extraordinary way back from the frontage, separate no. 12 from a 19th-century stock brick survival, Carlisa House (**nos 20-22**). This is of two window bays, the windows, which have lost their sashes, in arched recessed surrounds. The shop fronts are not in keeping with the building and maintenance is poor, the overall effect being one of shabbiness.

The Arcade (**nos 26-28**), converted by the 1954 remodelling of the rear of a former garage originally built in 1924, is a low key but attractive feature of the High Street (*Fig. 43*). Its façade is symmetrical, with a shop either side of the passage, above which is an oriel window. There are Crittall metal windows at the first floor. The passage through it is plain but clean and bright, and is of course an unambiguously pedestrian space. On the pavement in front of it is a raised brick plinth enclosed by a low wall, with a seat, a planter and a forest of temporary signs, a peculiarly uninviting prospect for the weary shopper or anyone else.

Fig. 43 The Arcade.

At the junction with **St. Thomas Road**, there is a splendid view of the tower and spire of the parish church, but it is not enhanced by No Entry signs, double yellow lines and prominent road markings, and parked cars (Fig. 44).

Fig. 44 The High Street entrance to St. Thomas Road

The **Post Office** of 1939 is a large handsome brick building in the neo-classical style with metal sash windows. From the Post Office to the former Burtons store, the frontage is all late 20th century and of no architectural merit. **No. 32** (Iceland) is totally out of keeping, a large modern building, its front at both floors consisting almost entirely of glazing within a red metal frame. **Nos 34 and 34a** are a pair of modern shops, their fronts framed by tiled piers, with a brick first floor with windows in concrete surrounds. **Nos 36 and 36a** (Boots and Starbucks) make use of inappropriate modern materials at the first floor, prefabricated pebbledashed panels and lemon yellow panels above and below the windows of the right hand unit, these contrasting with the good shop front at the ground floor (*Fig. 45*). N**os 38 and 38a** present a strange dichotomy between Thorntons, a traditional shop front with a tall imposing metal window above it in a stone surround (now painted) with a pediment, and The Link, its shop windows cluttered with advertising and the first floor consisting of unsympathetic continuous glazing above grey panels (*Fig. 45*).

Fig. 45 Nos 36-38, and the former Burtons store.

No. 42 was formerly Burtons the Tailors, as a foundation stone laid in 1939 by Austin Stephen Burton records. The building is in the muted Art Deco style favoured by Burtons, and this together with its height make it a landmark in the High Street, which hitherto has been predominantly two storey on this side (*Fig. 45*). Although the character of the distinctive upper storeys with their stone window surrounds is intact, apart from the replacement of the window frames in UPVC, the black marble fascias of the ground floor shop windows have suffered through the subdivision of the store into several units. The New Look shop sign in particular is simply planted onto the old fascia, taking no account of its original design. Also at ground floor, the carriage arch looks through to a yard with litter and parked cars, the wooden gates to it being decorated with an unsympathetic reddish varnish, and there is excessive signage round the doorway to the Snooker Club *(Fig. 46*).

Fig. 46 Gateway through to the rear of the former Burtons store.

The late 14th- or early 15th-century ruin of **St. Thomas chapel** is one of the most interesting features of the High Street. It was built of flint rubble with some Kentish Ragstone and Reigate stone used for the surrounds to the openings in the walls and elsewhere. All that survives today is part of the north and west walls of the nave, and the tower, which unusually was located inside the nave, in the north-west corner, something which could indicate a shortage of external space at the time of its construction. The ruin is a scheduled ancient monument (county monument no. 29398). The scheduled area includes not just the ruin but the land around it (*Fig. 1*). No work can be done to a scheduled monument without the consent of the Department of Culture Media and Sport and English Heritage. The land to the north has been used as a graveyard.

Old repairs to the ruin have been carried out using a distinctive mix of small flints and tile, following what seems to be a feature of some of the tower masonry. More recently the masonry has been consolidated using cement mortar which is potentially damaging to the softer stones incorporated in it. Recent damage to the west wall needs repair. Repairs should be carried out using lime mortar by contractors with experience of this type of masonry.

The footprint of the chapel is marked out with lines of robustly mortared rounded flints, which look quite good and are fairly maintenance free. On the west side of the tower, there are good railings erected in 1902 when restoration work was carried out. The crazy paving in the chapel area is inadequate for this situation and ought to be replaced in stone.

In the Essex volume of the Buildings of England (1954), Nikolaus Pevsner wrote of the chapel, 'Brentwood could make better use of this accent in a visually not very successful town'. This problem remains today, despite the enhancement scheme in the 1990s and recent repaving of the approach to the Bay Tree Centre. There can be no doubt that it is a difficult space to handle: it represents a gap in the street frontage, the chapel being set back from it, and there are pedestrian thoroughfares either side of it to and from the Bay Tree shopping precinct (*Fig. 47*). It ought to function as a piazza-like space, as a place of public resort, but there is a poor sense of enclosure. Between the chapel and the road, there is a desolate expanse of hard surfacing. The low brick wall with a black-painted box section metal rail on top of it has a strong horizontal emphasis, reinforced by the lines of the modern building to the west of the chapel, whereas what is required is more height and verticality, which is provided only to some degree by two large bay trees. Another plane tree on the street frontage, and railings with planting behind them, might be one approach to tackling this problem. The repaving scheme is quite successful, but there is too much unrelieved hard surfacing and it would have looked better if some real stone had been used as well as concrete paving. Another problem is the failure to integrate the structures and spaces around the chapel. The large expanses of glazing and coloured panelling of the new shop building occupied by WH Smith and the remodelled Bay Tree Centre take little account of their surroundings and represent a missed opportunity (*Fig. 48*).

Fig. 47 The chapel ruin seen from the High Street.

Fig. 48 View down the west side of the chapel to the Bay Tree Centre.

No. 44, Pepperell House, grade II listed and one of only three Georgian buildings in the High Street, stands in front of the chapel tower (*Fig. 49*). Aspects of its plan and the jetty on its east side suggest it incorporates a late medieval building. Its brickwork has traces of tuck pointing. It has distinctive sash windows separated by wide mullions in the form of fluted columns with capitals. The house is very attractive, but its situation does little for it, as it stands amidst new development uneasily marooned in the large area of paving around the chapel. The bins parked at the rear of the house look particularly unsightly in what is in effect public open space.

Fig. 49 Pepperell House.

West of the chapel is a long parade of two storey shops at right angles to the High Street leading down to the Bay Tree Centre, behind a three storey frontage block currently home to NatWest and Peacocks (**nos 46-48**). These buildings are clad in prefabricated concrete panels finished with a grey grit. The material may be alien, but the elevations are quite well proportioned and detailed.

The **Bay Tree Centre** is a recent remodelling of the 1975 Chapel High shopping precinct. Inside, it is clean, fresh and new, but externally as an architectural composition it does little to acknowledge its context, and is overshadowed by Becket House, a tall office building now being refurbished as flats which is totally out of scale with its surroundings. Although the shopping precinct and Becket House are outside the conservation area, they nevertheless dominate its setting in this part of the High Street.

Nos 50-54 have their first floor of brick, nicely detailed, articulated by pilasters, with a cornice and Crittall windows, but the shop front fascias are enormous and unrelated to the elevation above. No. 54 has an air conditioning unit attached to the shop front. The metal gates to the alley down the side of no. 54 are set back from the frontage, creating a dark unattractive re-entrant space. **Nos 56-58** have a plain brick first floor, an asymmetric composition with Crittall windows and a parapet to a flat roof. The shop fronts are reasonably good.

Nos 60-64 are a group of surviving late medieval buildings, grade II listed (*Fig. 50*). They are difficult to assess because of alterations and because the fabric is obscured, but 62 seems originally to have been a *c.*1400 hall, possibly aisled, with 60 and 64 being cross-wings forming an H-plan house. Today they present three gables to the street, the hall roof having been remodelled, a building form which proclaims their early date and is quite distinct in today's High Street. After the chapel, these are the oldest surviving buildings in the High Street, and any works at them should be closely monitored for information on their history and development. An alleyway has been cut through no. 60 leading to South Street, creating a magical space with on one side the flank of no. 62 with a magnificent arched medieval door and some exposed framing, now largely replaced in Tudor brick, and views through to the irregular small scale buildings at this end of South Street. The alley is much used by pedestrians. It is not enhanced by graffiti.

Fig. 50 Nos 60-64 High Street, some of the few surviving medieval buildings in the High Street, with the narrow entrance to South Street (photographed 1989).

No. 66 (M & Co.) has a large glazed shop front, and a narrow horizontal clearstorey window in a tiled surround (now painted) at the first floor. The Bakers Oven (**nos 68-70**) has a curved shop front in a fairly traditional style, with a canted oriel window, now unfortunately in brown UPVC, above, projecting from a painted 19th-century brick façade which might conceal something older behind. Beyond this point, the frontage was redeveloped as far as Crown Street in the 1960s. **Nos 72-74** (Zizzi) has recently been refurbished in the dark wood which is currently fashionable for shop fronts. The plain finishes, traditionally proportioned shop window, expansive cream painted fascia with raised lettering, has made a harmonious composition of a very ordinary brick flat-roofed building (*Fig. 51*). **Nos 76 and & 76a** are not so attractive, having boxy oriel windows with metal frames, and a token string course below the parapet made of small tiles. The building extends round the corner and forms part of the cluster of poor modern buildings which make the junction with Crown Street and Hart Street so unappealing.

Fig. 51 Nos 72-74 High Street.

Nos 78-82 Hanover House is a three-storey modern block which is excessively tall and out of proportion with its neighbours, looking a storey higher than other three-storey buildings in the High Street. It has six metal framed oriel windows with concrete bases rising full height through the upper storeys. The traditional style windows of the Slug and Lettuce are a welcome contrast to the main bulk of the building. This same contrast can be found at Café Rouge, and O'Neills at **no. 86**, the upper two storeys of the former being very plain and dull, of the latter consisting of a largely glazed curtain wall.

The rest of this side of the High Street comprises older buildings with narrow frontages, which mostly have the potential to look attractive but are often let down by poor signage and maintenance, interspersed with modern ones of indifferent design.

Nos 88-92 are Victorian, two storey, with a slate covered pitched roof which looks as if it may conceal an older structure. The brickwork of no. 88 is white painted; the sash windows have been replaced with ill-proportioned timber casements. Nos 90-92 retain something of their former mid 19th-century elegance. They are stuccoed and lined out in imitation of ashlar stonework. The outermost first floor windows are round headed, the inner three with stucco surrounds with pediments above consoles. But the window frames are now in UPVC, no. 92 (Blockbuster) has a hideous blue shop front, and there is an ugly attic extension above the roof of no. 90. The bottoms of the stucco pilasters at the first floor have been removed to accommodate the shop fascias.

The distinctive hipped roof of Co-op Funeralcare at right angles to the street suggests the presence of an old building given a brick façade and sash windows in the 19th century. The shop front with its arched windows has recently acquired an unsympathetic new fascia. The Fruiterer and News Shop has a stuccoed façade; the sash windows have been replaced with casements, and the property needs decoration. **No. 98** is a three storey modern building with lead clad oriel windows, currently empty and in a shabby condition.

Nos 100-102 are Victorian in appearance, with painted brick facades, but possibly older. No. 102 still has its sash windows. **Nos 104-108** are modern buildings set back behind their neighbours, presumably respecting an earlier frontage line. No. 104 is a three storey building the design of which takes no account its neighbours but which might have been acceptable in a different context. It has a single storey shop projecting out onto the pavement, a very basic metal framed box, all glazing and advertisements.

Nos 106-106b are a two storey brick building dating probably from the 1950s, with metal windows in concrete surrounds which need decoration. The shop fronts are unrelated to each other or the well balanced first floor elevation.

Nos 108-114 are a row of older buildings, some of which are amongst the oldest in the High Street, all grade II listed (*Fig. 52*). Visually they form an attractive and potentially coherent group. They are all timber-framed: 108-110 are brick fronted, the rest are rendered. 110a and 112-114 are gabled and thus medieval in appearance. 108 has 17th-century framing at the first floor. 110 is a two bay 16th-century cross-wing with a crown-post roof, possibly once jettied and housing a medieval shop. 110a is the site of a medieval hall, now completely rebuilt. 112 is a large early 16th-century two bay cross-wing. With 110 and 110a, it may have formed an H-plan house. 114 has some 17th-century framing but is mainly 19th- and 20th-century. The sash windows of these buildings mostly survive, their shop fronts generally respect their character, but maintenance is poor.

Fig. 52 Nos 108-112, timber-framed buildings at the west end of the High Street (photographed 1989).

The end of this row of buildings separates the High Street from Hart Street, and is prominent at the west entrance to the conservation area. In the long views down to Wilsons Corner, the High Street appears a typical busy town centre shopping street, but the flank of no. 114 in the foreground just presents a plain dull rendered wall. It is doubtless for this reason that the Heritage Column sculpture by Gary Thrussell was located on the wide pavement here in 2004. As a piece of public art, it could be quite successful if more attention were given to its setting. It is surrounded by street signs and electricity boxes; to the right of it is a shabby community noticeboard with very few notices and several blue skips (*Fig. 53*). The area needs tidying up and would benefit from good quality bollards or railings to give it more definition.

Fig. 53 The side wall of no. 114 at the High Street/Hart Street junction, with the Heritage Column dwarfed by buildings and the lamp standard, and surrounded by street signs and clutter.

To the west of the Kings Road junction only one property is included in the conservation area, a listed grade II Georgian house, **no. 120**, Bennetts Funeral Directors, possibly an earlier building remodelled. Its handsome appearance is enhanced by a high standard of maintenance. It has a good doorcase and a striking early 20th-century bow-fronted shop window.

HART STREET

This was formerly a back lane on the south side of infill buildings in the marketplace. It is an important part of the historic town plan, and a street that is visually attractive with potential for further improvement. The land on the south side of the street has been the object of various planning proposals over a period of about 20 years. It has now been developed with housing, a large complex, The Square, at the west end, and the recently completed Market Terrace at the east end, both in an Essex Design Guide vernacular style. These developments have been quite successful. The housing is built up to the frontage line. The traditional building forms provide a degree of unity between the blocks of which they are composed, whilst differing roof heights and materials create visual variety (*Fig. 54*). However, the result is that this side is strongly residential in character, with the look of a historic market town, whereas the north is more workaday, consisting of the backs of the buildings on the High Street (*Fig. 55*). They comprise a mix of outbuildings, a few shop fronts, small yards and hard standings for parking, as well as one or two late 20th-century buildings in a modern style which typically look rather out of character. Although there is little of architectural merit, the variety and irregularity of the buildings creates visual interest. It is likely that there will be pressure for development and change on this side of the street, and it would certainly benefit from some sensitive improvement. It is important that such shop fronts as exist are as well designed as possible, and that a balance is struck between the necessary service function of the rear access to the High Street buildings, and the need to achieve good streetscape.

Fig. 54 Looking east down Hart Street, the frontage of The Square on the right hand side. As elsewhere in the conservation area, skips and brightly coloured bins are an eyesore.

Fig. 55 Looking west along the north side of Hart Street.

With this appearance, the street feels as if it might be a pedestrian zone, but in fact it is one-way. The prominent double yellow lines that run down it are ignored and parked cars litter both sides. Car parking also intrudes into the limited open spaces on the north side. There are clay pavers outside the new Market Terrace development, but the asphalt pavements and also the road surface are in poor condition (*Fig. 56*). These negative features (yellow lines, car parking, poor surfacing) have an adverse effect on the view looking west down the street.

Fig. 56 View west down Hart Street, showing conspicuous yellow lines, parked cars and poor surfacing.

The Crown Street approach to Hart Street is unattractive, being enclosed by the rear elevation of the modern buildings on both corners. A wide area of paving on the bend on the west side, with an isolated lamp post behind cast iron bollards, is an unsatisfactory space in the shadow of **nos 1-3**, a concrete framed building which has had its windows replaced in UPVC (*Fig. 57*). Between this and Hanover House, there is a narrow space open to pedestrians occupied by concrete bollards and skips, and full of litter and broken glass.

Fig. 57 Junction of Crown Street and Hart Street.

On the corner of Hart Street and Crown Street, there is a Victorian building (**no. 5 Crown Street**), white painted and rendered, but with its slate roof, sashes and shop windows largely intact (*Fig. 57*). Formerly a motorbike dealership, it is now empty. It has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the appearance of the area, like its neighbour, the **fire station** built in 1902 and restored in 2004. This has been given a traditional style shop front at the ground floor, whilst a wrought iron arch at the side leads to a cobbled footpath round nicely refurbished outbuildings remodelled as small shops (*Fig. 5*). This is a successful mews style development, a scheme which has made good use of backland space. The footpath leads through to the **Crown Street/Kings Road car park** which could do with some soft landscaping and resurfacing. **Nos 5-7** (the Teriss Bar) is a stock brick building which has had its sash windows replaced but retains a satisfactory appearance.

The rest of the south side of the street comprises 21st-century developments separated by the listed grade II **Gardeners Arms**. This is another Georgian brick building with flared headers. The recent landscaping round it has been successful, giving it a better setting than that enjoyed by most public houses. However, there is an inappropriate door to the fire escape at the side, and signage on the pavement at the front is becoming invasive.

Both the large new developments on Hart Street incorporate three-and-a-half storey elements, but these are carefully sited in the middle of them with the result that their greater scale does not prove overwhelming. The western development, **The Square**, encloses a raised central platform beneath which there is underground car parking, a feature which complies with the recommendations of the Essex Planning Officers' Association Urban Place Supplement. At the corner with Kings Road, there is a five storey tower with a pyramidal roof, a landmark structure of a type which risks becoming a cliché of modern apartment block developments (*Fig. 53*). However, it works quite well except that on the western approach to the town it draws the eye away from the High Street and shows up the weakness of the unsatisfactory space by no. 114 between Hart Street and the High Street.

CROWN STREET

Beyond the initial transition from the High Street, characterised by the ugly modern buildings in Hart Street and an unsightly car park with skips behind the Abbey, this street is Victorian in appearance, with terraces of cottages, mostly terraced and of varying dates. Many have suffered through modern improvements and conversion to office and retail use. However, the latter has created an area of interesting small shops with an atmosphere of its own, distinct from the High Street.

On the west side there is **Crown Street Terrace** of 1894, and then another row of cottages, separated by Old Kings Yard, full of skips and densely parked cars. An infill office building dated 1998 has to a degree tidied up part of this space inasmuch as the hard landscaping round it has been improved. The cottages have had their roofs replaced with interlocking tiles and most of the upper storey windows have been replaced, but the shop fronts are quite good. Set in a backland space, shoehorned between Crown Street and South Street, is a curiosity, a row of cottages with a plaque which reads 'Crown Street 1854'. They are all rendered, and have replacement roofs and in most cases windows (*Fig. 69*), but they have a certain charm to which the better kept front gardens contribute.

Fig. 58 Shops on the west side of Crown Street.

On the west side of the street, behind the former motorbike dealership there is an open space occupied by outbuildings and mainly used as a car park. This contributes nothing to the street scene and is a potential infill site. Further south is a row of stock brick Victorian shops, some of them three-storey, most of them with their sash windows preserved and the shop fronts quite acceptable (*Fig. 58*). The frontage is again interrupted, this time for the **Crown Street/Kings Road car park,** the large gap being screened by an inadequate low brick wall with exotic planting (*Fig. 59*). This should at the least be given better landscape treatment, whilst an infill development would restore the street frontage.

Fig. 59 Entrance to the Crown Street/Kings Road car park, a weak link in the Crown Street frontage.

SOUTH STREET

On the 1st edition OS map of 1872, South Street is called Chapmans Alley, a good description for the north end of it where a narrow passage provides access from the High Street. Where it widens out to the south, its west side was built up with cottages in the 19th century (*Fig. 60*).

The south end, where the conservation area boundary cuts across it, has regrettably been blocked and deflected to the west by 20th-century development and the Coptfold multi-storey car park which broods over the area. The southern end, and the service yards on the east side, are a sad contrast with the medieval quality of the alleyway leading from the High Street.

Fig. 60 Looking south down South Street, with Becket House in the background.

The bend where the road turns round to join Crown Street is asphalted for residents' parking. Although this may be a necessary convenience, in visual terms this is a very unsatisfactory use of a corner plot. The planting intended to soften the area is untidy and needs attention. Partial enclosure with a wall, and better planting, could improve this space.

The southern half of the west side of the street is occupied by a row of six stock brick 19th-century cottages, with replacement doors and timber double-glazed sash windows, and then by three semi-detached pairs of much the same date, less well treated, all rendered, with replacement doors and most with replacement windows.

This side of the street may be Victorian in character and potentially attractive, but its setting is dismal because on the other side there is a featureless brick flank wall of a building at the back of Becket House, and the huge service area for the Bay Tree Centre. An attempt has been made to screen this with a wall and small trees, but this should be better designed and detailed to be at all effective. The row of bollards in front of the southern cottages is probably necessary to protect them from the enormous lorries which regularly come to the service area. These cottages also have block paving outside them, but this is only a token gesture in an area which requires a coherent soft and hard landscaping scheme. Double yellow lines are very prominent in this street, which is not free of cars as there is some residents' parking opposite the cottages.

The north end of the street narrows to the alleyway to the High Street, the backs of the medieval buildings (nos 60-64) presenting a good composition. On the west side is a late 20th-century building, with a variety of external finishes, and beyond that a stock brick building, both restaurants. On the east is a weatherboarded building, now a dentist's, which looks typical of backland areas, and then a litter-strewn yard behind a stock brick wall to the rear of no. 60.

QUEENS ROAD

Originally this seems to have been a back lane to plots on the High Street, but today it is a busy link road between Ingrave Road and the lower end of the town by the railway station. It forms a margin to the north-south grain of the street plan between it and the High Street. It became developed in the 19th and early 20th century, mainly with detached and relatively large buildings, those on the south side being associated with the Catholic Church. Two large blocks of flats have recently been built opposite each other. Further development of this sort could threaten to change the character of the area.

St. Helen's Catholic Infant School has, on the frontage, a wide late 20th-century building with a low pitched roof and a flat-roofed forebuilding. Its brickwork is laid to Flemish bond. The narrow space in front of it is full of parked cars and separated from the pavement by a chain link fence. A better boundary treatment is desperately needed here.

The Grange (no. 93) is a late 19th-century building in institutional use. It has a red brick façade, with stock brick to the sides. The windows have raised surrounds in brickwork and are a distinctive feature, but the frames are now in UPVC. Its setting is enhanced by a row of pollard limes in the front garden. On the west side of the house, an octagonal chapter-house style building has been added to it; the materials used are traditional looking, but the building form seems rather alien.

Behind an old stock brick wall and overgrown hedging is a modest detached house, the subdued modern lines of which advertise as the Anglican vicarage and the work of the Chelmsford Diocesan Surveyor. The house lies just outside the conservation area boundary.

On the north side are two substantial late 19th-century house, **nos 100 & 98** (Brent House), the former in a Queen Anne style with a large projecting bay with a balcony and gable, the latter plain, double fronted with projecting bays. Both are well preserved and make a significant contribution to the appearance of this part of the conservation area. No. 96 (dental surgery) is Victorian gothic in style; although its features are well preserved, its large garden has been gravelled over to provide parking and as such it has an adverse effect on the appearance of St. Thomas Road.

Queenswood House on the south side is a three storey block of flats in red brick and red stock-type brick (*Fig. 61*). It has timber windows. Large gables are a feature of it, helping to break up the mass of the building and giving it a slightly Victorian look appropriate to the area.

Fig. 61 Queens Road, Queenswood House.

A pair of semi-detached red brick three storey houses dating from the early to mid 19th century are now incorporated in the Ursuline High School (*Fig. 62*). They have distinctive stucco window surrounds and are in reasonable condition, though their sash windows have been replaced with metal frames.

Fig. 62 Queens Road, the Spread Eagle and the pair of early 19th-century red brick houses now part of the Ursuline School.

The Spread Eagle is a Victorian public house occupying what is now an island plot where Coptfold Road joins Queens Road. It is rendered and lined out in imitation of ashlar stonework. Maintenance is good and signage restrained. Its appearance is worthy of its prominent position. Not quite so satisfactory is the small area of open space to the west of it where the shrub planting could do with attention (*Fig. 62*).

On the north side of the road is the boundary wall to **St. Thomas' churchyard**, of stock brick with thin weedy modern railings and red brick piers. The churchyard is the most significant green space in the conservation area, occupying a long narrow rectangular north-south plot. It is closed for burial and maintained by the Borough Council. It was refurbished in 2002 for the royal jubilee. The central path running through it is flanked by lamp posts, evergreen trees and graves, which reinforce its strong directional emphasis (*Fig. 63*). It is a pleasant space, very green as many of the graves have been cleared. A bound gravel surface would improve the appearance of the asphalt path. The lamp posts are of a modern design appropriate to the setting. Unfortunately there is no bench in the churchyard. The wooden fencing with concrete posts on the east side, to the rear of the properties in St. Thomas Road, should be replaced with more sympathetic materials such as a brick wall.

Fig. 63 St. Thomas churchyard.

St. Thomas Court is a rather dull bland three storey block, not as good as Queenswood House, with large expanses of unrelieved stretched bond brickwork and UPVC windows. The railings on the boundary, however, are good, and there is a nice bench set in a well detailed re-entrant formed in them.

ST. THOMAS ROAD

This road presumably developed to provide access to the parish church, the oldest part of it being the northern length at right angles to the High Street. The 1st edition OS map of 1872 (*Fig. 3*) shows it as a wide, almost processional route, with no houses facing on to it, leading to the west end of the church, which then stood isolated within a nursery. The southern part of the road, running down the east side of the church, was developed later. It is shown on the 2nd edition OS map of 1896, by which time the nursery had disappeared. This part of the road was built up with late Victorian villas, mainly semi-detached pairs, and it is these which determine its character. They are built of red brick and yellow stocks, some now rendered and painted. **Nos 29-35** are slightly later, early 20th-century in date, with pebble-dashed upper storeys and false half timbering in the gables. **Nos 34 and 36** are later still (no. 36 being late 20th-century infill), but they are in a sympathetic style and fit in well. The houses are generally well maintained and the impression given by the street is good, but some have lost their slates to concrete tiles, some gardens have been paved over for car parking, and UPVC windows have begun to creep in. It is important that there is no further erosion of the architectural quality of the street. The rear yard to the dental surgery on Queen Street at the southern end of the street has an adverse effect on its appearance and should be improved by landscaping.

St. Thomas church by E.C. Lee, 1882-90, grade II listed, is a huge town church built mainly of a random patchwork of rather small flints with occasional stone blocks, and Bath stone dressings. It is in the Early English style with lancet windows. A distinctive feature are the rounded buttresses. The interior is vast but relatively plain. The building is dominated by the soaring spire, which rises from a tower which seems rather narrow for its height. The spire is a landmark which can be seen from many parts of the town centre (*Fig. 44*). The north elevation of the church is prominent in views south down St. Thomas Road and Moores Place and is a dominant feature of these areas. The south side of the church is hardly so visible, partly because of the presence of the **parish room** of *c*.1986 by Richard Burbidge. This is a good attempt to produce a modern building in traditional materials and acknowledging the architectural style of the main church. It is built of knapped flint and stone ashlar, with slate hanging. It is unfortunate that the slates are synthetic.

On the east side of the church, the hedge needs maintenance and the tree-planting needs to be given more thought. The graves have been largely cleared from the churchyard to the north of the church. There are good railings at the entrance to the churchyard but no gates. The railings round the west side of the church, intended to prevent vandalism, are badly rusted. The granite chippings in this area are not an appropriate material.

The **Lodge (no. 28)**, on the corner with Moores Place, is a pretty double-fronted house dated 1906, of red brick with flared headers. It is an appropriate foil to the north side of the parish church.

The north part of the road is aligned directly on the church tower which makes for good views from the High Street. Except for the junction with the High Street, the pavements are made of reddish clay pavers, and the road surface of ‘tegula’ or similar. The road here has a pedestrian feel to it, but this is deceptive: it is a one-way street, there is parking on the pavement on the west side and a parking bay on the west. The cars and road markings have an adverse effect on the character of this end of the street (*Figs 64 & 65*). On the west side are St. Thomas Villas of 1895, on the east the houses bear a plaque ‘Haywards 1903’. These houses have all been converted to shops, and most are estate

agents, the uniformity of use and architectural style creating the appearance of almost a small village centre, although the signage, especially the boards on the pavements, has become intrusive. Some original sash windows survive in these buildings. The yard behind the post office on the High Street is very busy and has a lot of signs round it; the street scene would benefit from better boundary treatment here.

Fig. 64 St. Thomas Road, looking north.

Fig. 65 St. Thomas Road, looking south.

MOORES PLACE

This is a backland lane off the High Street which has become built up and developed an individual identity. Views down it are dominated by the cathedral-like proportions of the parish church, which the road itself cannot match in quality. Its surface is patched and broken and disfigured by double yellow lines, cars are parked down one side, whilst the Argos service bay with its tatty structures and skips is an eyesore. Worst of all, the road feels like a pedestrian area and is much used by pedestrians, but is a busy rat run for cars, albeit one-way north-south from the High Street. Being narrow, it can readily block when lorries come down it (*Fig. 66*). There is huge scope here for improvements to the public realm.

Fig. 66 Traffic jammed at the south end of Moores Place.

On the west side, the flank of the Arcade has a regular pattern of windows and doors, whilst a concrete lintel running its full length and clearstorey windows give the elevation a pronounced horizontal effect. Further south are the gabled rear extensions and yards of the late 19th-century houses on St. Thomas Road. These ought to form an attractive composition, but are scarred by air conditioning units and an excess of no parking notices.

Opposite, on the east side, are older buildings behind the High Street, of stock brick and rendered and white painted; the Argos service yard; and then a single storey flat-roofed building which probably once had an industrial function but is now divided into three shops and two cafés. Although the building may not have any particular merit, the use is perfect for the space and brings life and vitality into it.

11. EVALUATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS TO THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

A map (*Fig. 67*) has been prepared assessing the contribution made by individual buildings to the appearance and character of the conservation area. Although inevitably to some degree subjective, it can be a helpful guide in the planning process. Buildings have been graded on a scale of five according to the following criteria:

1. Negative, buildings of no architectural quality detrimental to the character of the area, either by reason of mass, design, materials or siting.
2. Negative, buildings of indifferent design or detailing, or unsuited to the character of the conservation area.
3. Buildings which have a neutral presence in the conservation area, fitting satisfactorily into it.
4. Positive contribution through design, age, materials or detailing.
5. Positive, listed buildings or landmark buildings.

Unsympathetic alterations or 'improvements' can have the effect of moving a building down a grade. Similarly, reversal of such alterations could restore its original character and move it up a grade.

The map also shows good and bad views, and the extent of car parks and parked cars which by their very nature form negative townscape.

12. TOWNSCAPE AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS

In common with most town centres, the dominant features of the conservation area are traffic and cars. The approach from the west is marked by the very busy junction with a double mini-roundabout. Traffic flows down the High Street tend to be intermittent, and crossing is not difficult, with reasonably well designed crossing places. Street signs are generally neither intrusive nor excessive, though there are certain locations where they could be rationalised and reduced in number. Double yellow lines are very prominent. Nowhere in the conservation area have the thin ones recommended for conservation areas been used.

The north side of the conservation area is largely enclosed by car parks which have an adverse effect on its setting. The Kings Road/Crown Street car park is quite a prominent feature to the detriment of this part of the conservation area. These areas apart, there are few car parks in the conservation area, but roadside car parking, and empty plots and yards used as car parks, can be visually damaging.

Hart Street, Moores Place and the north part of St. Thomas Road are all one-way streets, but feel as if they should be for pedestrian use. There are very few pedestrian spaces in the conservation area, though the High Street benefits from the great width of its pavements in the eastern half. Exceptions are the area around the ruined St. Thomas chapel leading to the Bay Tree Centre, and Millennium Walk through to Sainsburys. Both are well used, but the former is not a very successful space, whilst the latter leads to a car park which has to be traversed en route to the supermarket.

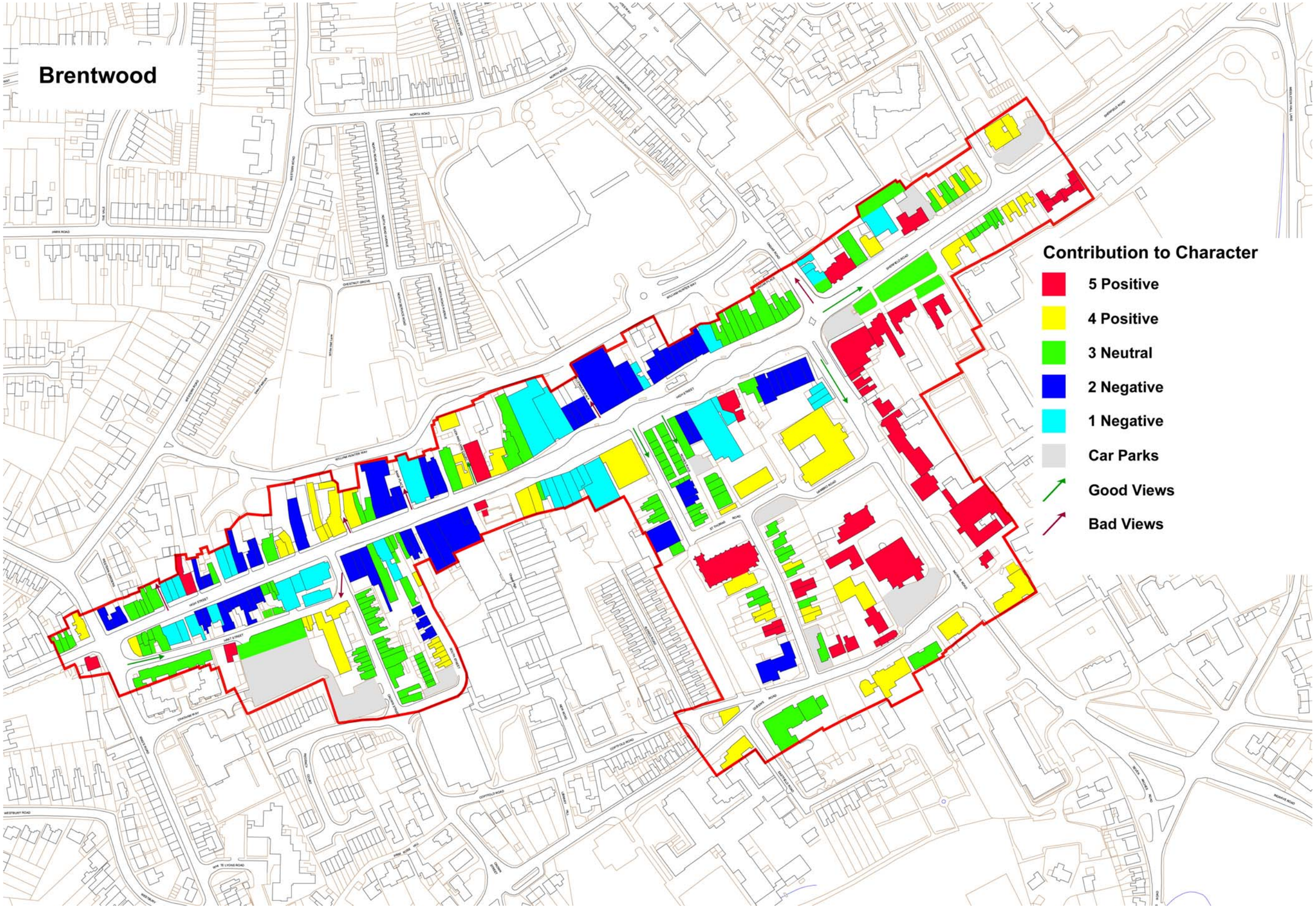

Fig. 67 Map showing the contribution of individual buildings to the character of the conservation area.

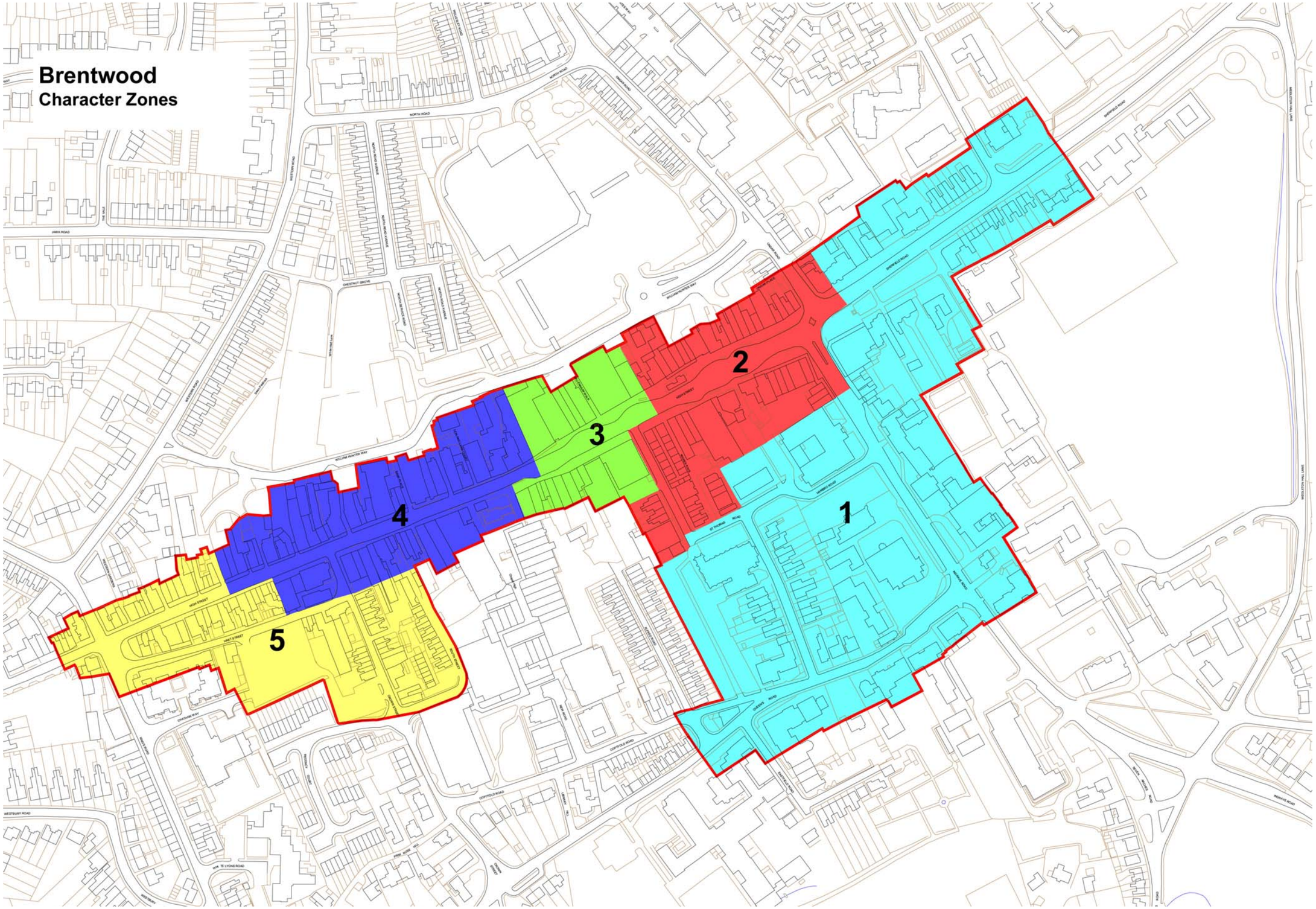

Fig. 68 Map showing character zones identified in the conservation area.

Green space is a rare commodity in the conservation area. The patches of greensward in Shenfield Road are very important visually and in contributing to the character of the street. The most significant green spaces are the graveyards attached to the cathedral and St. Thomas parish church. There is really only public access to the latter, the path through it being well used. Places of public resort are limited to the area round the ruined St. Thomas chapel and the wider pavements of the High Street. As indicated above, there are places that could be managed to encourage use by the public and pedestrians.

The long views down the High Street are a predominant feature of the conservation area, the perspective effect heightened by the narrowing at its west end. However, its straightness means that views down it tend to be bland, and the drop in ground level at the west end means that there is no sense of closure in this direction, whereas Wilsons Corner constitutes a landmark looking east. At the east end of the High Street, taller and more modern buildings predominate, and trees contribute to the street scene. To the west, narrower frontages and a great mix of building types provide variety. On the north side of the High Street, there are about a dozen lanes which originally ran through to the backlands. Some are valuable and well used pedestrian routes to the car parks, but with the exception of Lion and Lamb Court, they present dismal views down badly surfaced alleys cluttered with skips, with parked cars beyond.

The drop in level is also a problem in Hart Street where there is no satisfactory closure of westward views (*Fig. 56*), and where eastward ones are best, partly for this reason, but also because of the success of the new developments. Views in the side streets south of the High Street tend to be spoilt by car parking and service yards. In Shenfield Road and Ingrave Road, the views are mostly good, though both suffer from heavy traffic.

13. CHARACTER ZONES

The conservation area can be divided into character zones, on the basis of visually unifying factors arising from the degree of open space or character and density of the built environment, combined with the age, uses and appearance of buildings. The boundaries, needless to say, are somewhat arbitrary, but the zones reflect real differences in the character of the conservation area which should be taken into account when development proposals are considered.

The following character zones are identified on *Fig. 68*:

1. Shenfield, Ingrave, Queens and St. Thomas Road, less built up and suburban in character, with large and significant Georgian and Victorian buildings surrounded by ample grounds, and housing of late Victorian date.
2. wide eastern end of the High Street, with a retail function and buildings of various types and dates, including Moores Place and the north end of St. Thomas Road which are closely linked
3. wide central part of the High Street, with modern buildings generally larger in scale, most of them post-War shops, those on the north side being three storey.
4. narrower west-central part of the High Street, with varied building types but modern ones continuing to make a predominant contribution to character.
5. western end of the High Street, Hart Street and Crown Street, with a variety of smaller older buildings and Victorian terraces.

14. PRESSURE FOR CHANGE IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Photographic evidence indicates that the High Street has undergone relatively little change in the last 20-30 years. Most planning applications for properties in it are for shop fronts and signs. These are often of poor and unsympathetic design, and as such can have an overwhelmingly adverse effect on the buildings and area in which they are situated.

Unlisted buildings, in particular those of Victorian or early 20th century date, make an important contribution to the character of the area. However, many of them have suffered from unsympathetic and uncontrolled alteration as a result of permitted development, notably replacement windows and doors, and modern concrete roof tiles (*Fig. 69*). Incremental inappropriate alterations can cause irreparable damage to the rhythm and cohesion of terraced houses in particular.

Fig. 69 Terraced cottages between Crown Street and South Street, the appearance of which has suffered from modern improvements.

Change of use of dwellings to offices or businesses can lead to the loss of gardens to car parking, to the detriment of the street scene. This has happened at nos 17-31 Shenfield Road, and the dental surgery at the corner of St. Thomas Road and Queen Street.

The recent rebuilding of the south side of Hart Street means that there are no longer any large currently identified development sites in the conservation area, except for Brentwood School where an application has been submitted to demolish Otway House and The Lodge and to replace them with a large new building which would not complement the strongly Victorian character of the area.

In the High Street, an improvement scheme prepared by Mouchel Parkman for Essex County Council Highways and Transportation and Brentwood Borough is currently being progressed (*Fig. 71*). This mainly involves complete resurfacing to make the street more pedestrian friendly, but a proposed slip road at the west end would involve demolishing the Sir Charles Napier and nos 143-147. The scheme will encourage traffic onto William Hunter Way where it is envisaged that the car park at the west end will be developed with a decked car park, a cinema and a foodstore.

15. MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS (*Fig. 72*)

BOUNDARY CHANGES

There are a number of problems with the way the boundary is drawn, mainly arising from the difficulties of successfully designating the area in a densely built-up town centre and the changes which occur when redevelopment takes place. In three locations, the boundary would benefit from rationalisation. On the south side of Hart Street, it follows the old property line and runs through the new complex, The Square, which makes no sense. The Square should be retained within the conservation area because of its key position at the western approach to it and its contribution to the appearance of Hart Street. It is therefore recommended that the boundary is redrawn to the south of it.

On the south side of Queens Road, the boundary runs through Queenswood House and other buildings and plots in an anomalous way. Again, this is a prominent building which fits well with the conservation area, and so to ensure that it does not undergo unsympathetic change, it would be better if the boundary were drawn round it. If that were done, it would be logical to include nos 9-19 Eastfield Road, a row of well preserved late Victorian villas, and the vicarage, the garden of which is bisected by the existing boundary.

The problem of William Hunter Way and its sensitive relationship to the conservation area has been highlighted above. The need to improve it should be fully acknowledged by the conservation area boundary which should be realigned to the street frontage rather than following the backs of the High Street buildings.

A small extension to the conservation area is proposed on the south side to include the block of buildings between Queen Street, Library Hill and Coptfold Road, and three shops on Coptfold Road by the junction with Alfred Road. These late 19th-century shops are relatively unaltered and form a good group. One has wide sash windows used to display wares. Behind them are some old outbuildings which contribute to the street scene. Unfortunately the terraced houses in Alfred Road have suffered badly with insensitive improvements, and it seems correct to omit it from the conservation area, though implementation of an Article 4 Direction might succeed in the long term in restoring some of its character. The island block between Queen Street, Library Hill and Coptfold Road includes a stuccoed 19th-century terrace and the former library and police station, which are all listed and thus protected. However, on the south side on Queens Road there are four rows of 19th-century terraced houses which retain much of their character despite some unsympathetic modernisation (*Fig. 70*). A stock brick workshop building with a Shell advertisement looks particularly good on the approach up the hill from the west.

Fig. 70 Victorian terraces in Queens Road which would benefit from the protection of being included in the conservation area.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING CONTROLS

In a conservation area, additional planning controls can be introduced by limiting permitted development rights through the use of an Article 4(2) direction under the Planning Act, such that planning permission would be required for certain defined categories of works. The original character of some of the 19th- and 20th-century buildings has already been altered, through replacement windows, concrete roof tiles, and the painting or rendering of brickwork. It is important to try and prevent its further erosion, to try and promote the restoration of original features, and to try and check the spread of UPVC, a material which is neither sympathetic in appearance or sustainable. The appearance of properties which have undergone alteration would be greatly improved if new windows were inserted to the original pattern. Front doors also contribute greatly to the appearance of houses, and similarly controls to ensure that they are not replaced unsympathetically would be valuable. The loss of front gardens for car parking, and unsatisfactory boundary treatments, have been highlighted in the appraisal as a problem in parts of the conservation area. It is therefore proposed that the following works should require planning permission under an Article 4 direction:

- Alterations to a property affecting windows, doors or other openings, including the insertion of new windows and doors.
- The application of render or cladding to the external walls of a dwellinghouse, or the painting of brickwork.
- The erection or construction of any fences, gates or other forms of enclosure to the front or sides of a dwellinghouse, or the alteration of fences, walls or other forms of enclosure if they adjoin the highway.
- The installation of solar panels and wind turbines.

The long term use of an Article 4 Direction should make it possible to restore lost features such as windows and doors, and thus re-instate the original appearance of old buildings which will once again be able to contribute to the character of the conservation area.

Change of use has been identified as a factor in the loss of front gardens to parking. In the absence of an Article 4 Direction, conditions withdrawing permitted development rights should be attached to change of use consents.

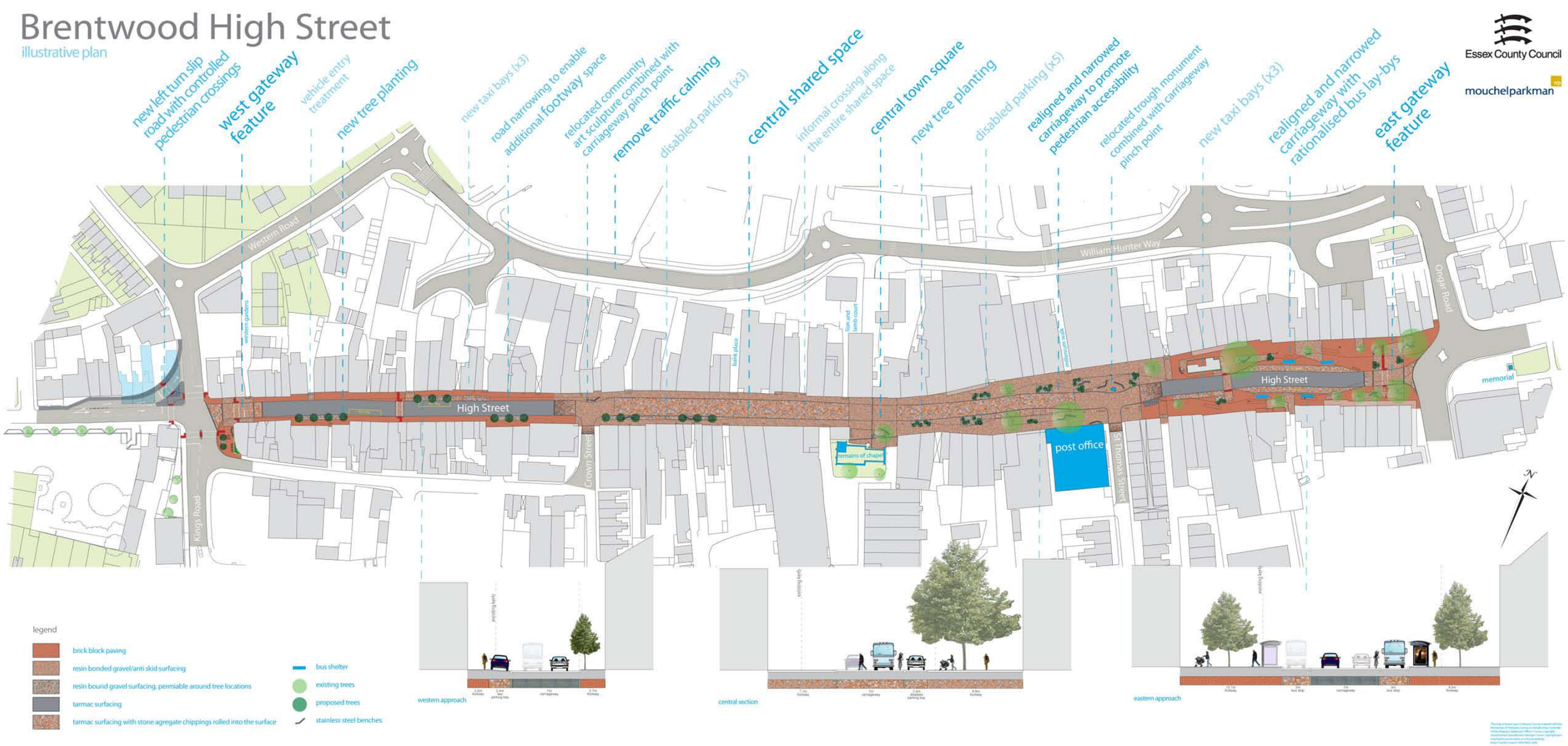

Fig. 71 The High Street improvement scheme.

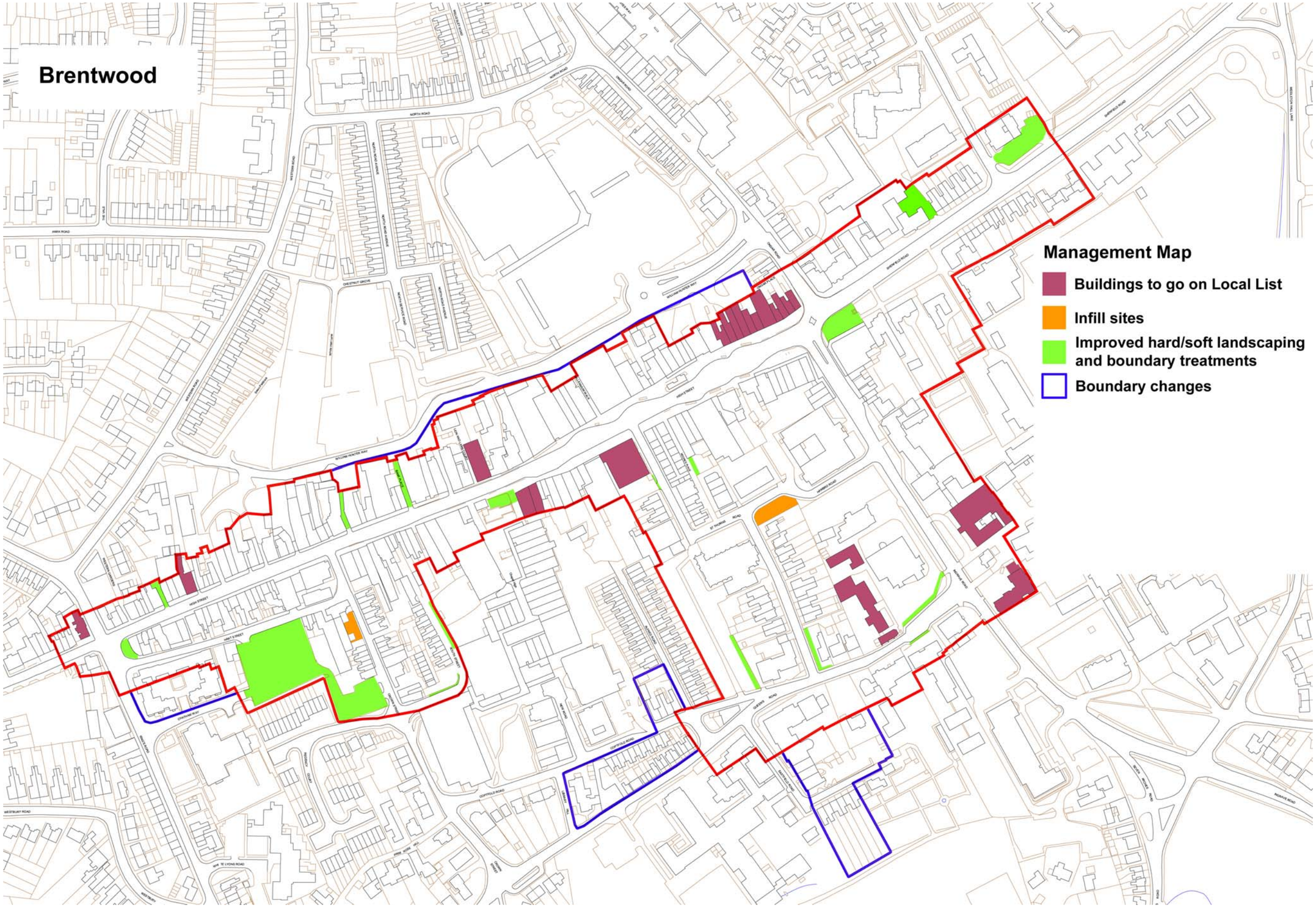

Fig. 72 Map illustrating management proposals for the conservation area.

HIGHWAYS, STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM

The 1990s High Street enhancement scheme looks tired and is in need of renewal, something being addressed by the improvement scheme currently put forward by Essex County Council Highways and Brentwood Borough. These proposals are very comprehensive, such that there is little point in detailed comment on aspects of the public realm. For instance, the Heritage Column which has a particularly unfortunate setting at the west end of the High Street will be relocated. It should be emphasised that the work needs to be done to a high standard, taking into account English Heritage guidance (i.e. Streets for All, English Heritage 2005), and model examples of such highways improvements such as Bury St. Edmunds.

The effect of the scheme will be to narrow the carriageway on the High Street, calm the traffic, and make the street more pedestrian friendly. A consequence of this will be to increase traffic flows on William Hunter Way to the north. The scheme involves the demolition of some of the better buildings in the High Street, nos 143-147 and the Sir Charles Napier at the its west end, to create a slip road accessing Weald Road and William Hunter Way. It is important that provision is made for developing the realigned corner with buildings that do justice to what is a focal position at the entrance to the conservation area.

The High Street improvement scheme should include some vision for the future development of William Hunter Way which occupies an important but problematic position at the edge of the conservation area, and has an effect on its setting. It should be recognised that removal of traffic from the High Street undoubtedly raises issues for pedestrians and traffic on William Hunter Way. The road lacks features of visual interest or which are human in scale. Although care has been expended on its design and layout, both sides of it are unattractive, and the backs of the High Street buildings (which are within the conservation area boundary) are mostly very ugly: some could be improved relatively simply by better maintenance and good signage, whilst the yards and open spaces would benefit from soft landscaping and the removal of parked cars.

As well as the High Street, there are side roads which would benefit hugely from enhancement schemes, i.e. Moores Place, South Street, and Hart Street. Well designed paving schemes could make the pedestrian, not the car, dominant in these roads. Scope for full pedestrianisation probably does not exist, but consideration should be given to closing access to Moores Place from the High Street. Through traffic makes it hazardous to pedestrians. In Hart Street, the asphalt pavements and road surface are in a dreadful condition and a scheme of block paving is shortly to be implemented. Block paving, which has been put down outside Market Terrace, could be used for both pavements and the road, with stone detailing.

The northern part of St. Thomas Road has been resurfaced in block paving in the same style as the High Street, yet is not pedestrian-friendly because of excessive traffic and cars parked on the private forecourt on the west side.

In conservation areas, it is possible to use narrow yellow lines to control parking. Nowhere in Brentwood has advantage been taken of this, which is unfortunate as there are a number of locations (e.g. Hart Street, Moores Place) where yellow lines significantly affect the appearance of the street scene for the worse. When road markings are renewed, the narrow lines should be used.

Street signs could possibly be made less obtrusive by rationalising them and reducing them in number at the Wilsons Corner junction. The signage and road markings at the entrance to St. Thomas Road from the High Street should be reviewed and made less prominent.

Public realm in Hart Street desperately needs improvement, a situation possibly explained by the amount of construction work which has taken place there recently

St. Thomas' churchyard could be improved by substituting bound gravel for the asphalt surface of the footpath, providing a bench, and a better boundary treatment, ideally a wall, on the east side to replace the inappropriate fence with concrete posts.

NEW DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN OF BUILDINGS & ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The town centre is a mature settlement fully built up with little open space. The backlands, as has been seen, are almost all fully occupied. The ample spaces round the buildings on Shenfield and Ingrave Roads are very much a feature of that part of the conservation area, and should not be encroached upon or compromised by infilling. Scope for new development is limited.

In the High Street, there are modern buildings of little architectural merit which could be redeveloped to the benefit of the overall street scene. There will be a temptation to try and redevelop the more modest buildings with 19th-century brick fronts, but these mostly contribute to the character of the conservation area. They may also conceal older timber frames.

Limited redevelopment could improve the appearance of the backs of the High Street buildings that face on to Hart Street, but here it is important to preserve the basic character of a mixture of backland outbuildings of various types. On William Hunter Way, however, there is a major opportunity for the redevelopment of backland spaces to create a street frontage.

Two small infill sites have been identified the development of which could enhance the areas in which they are located. The plot of land at the junction of Cathedral Place and St. Thomas Road used for car parking detracts from the street scene and could be improved by sensitive development. Views along Crown Street would be improved if the car park on its west side behind the former motorbike dealership were developed and the street frontage restored.

Any new build in the conservation area should acknowledge its surroundings and the character of the location in which it is situated, rather than uncritically follow approaches such as those proposed in the Essex Design Guide (1997 and 2005). High density development should now take account of the principles outlined in the Essex Planning Officers' Association Urban Place Supplement (2006). Thus in the middle part of the High Street it would be an act to denial to ignore the predominantly modern style of the buildings there, whilst at the western end there are smaller premises of various ages but mainly 19th- or early 20th-century. Context should provide a cue for architectural style, form and scale.

HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING AND BOUNDARY TREATMENT

There are numerous places in the conservation area where the street scene could be improved by better hard or soft landscaping or improved boundary treatment. These have been noted in the text and are indicated on *Fig. 71*.

The Hart Street/Crown Street public car park is due to be re-designed and re-surfaced, but better boundary treatment is needed in Crown Street, where the frontage would be improved by the erection of a carefully designed building at the south-east corner. The Westbury Road car park at the western edge of the conservation area is a good example of how a car park can be screened by walls, trees and planting.

Of privately owned car parking spaces, that by Wilsons Corner is one of the most prominent in need of attention. It would look better laid to grass to form a continuation of the greensward further east. The William Hunter monument would look better relocated nearer the corner.

The opportunity should be taken of the High Street improvement scheme to look again at the spaces around the chapel ruin. This should be a focal point in the High Street, yet does not really work like that, although it is a well used through route to the Bay Tree Centre. It should have a piazza-like feel to it, and needs a greater sense of enclosure. There could be a role for public art here.

Fig. 73 That part of the William Hunter Way frontage included in the conservation area. The landscaping scheme here needs review and improvement.

The alleyways on the north side of the High Street almost all need better treatment, whether to encourage public use of them or to improve the views down them. That part of William Hunter Way between Lion and Lamb Court and Bank Place which is in the conservation area (*Fig. 73*) requires better quality surfacing and railings, whilst signs could be reduced in number and the bicycle stands are probably redundant (railings can have much the same function). Where the large Boots and Marks and Spencer buildings extend right out to the frontage, these uncompromising structures could possibly be improved by better maintenance and signage, and the creation of shop fronts. At the east end of the road, the yards and low outbuildings could benefit from trees, soft landscaping and better boundary treatment.

Skips and bins are a prominent feature of side streets and alleys in the conservation area. The bright blue bins are very conspicuous. The Borough Council should consider changing their colour to one more appropriate for a conservation area such as grey.

SHOP FRONTS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

Many of the conservation area shop fronts are of a poor design that do not relate to the elevations above them. Often the signage is particularly inappropriate, with garish fascias. No other single aspect of a building has such a significant impact on it and its surroundings as shop fronts and signage. As an illustration of this, there are a number of High Street buildings which have new shop fronts in a traditional style which contrast with the modern design of the elevations above them and indeed improve their appearance. This is particularly true of the restaurants, cafés and bars which have opted for a traditional style as something that is more welcoming to their customers. In particular, there has been a recent vogue on the part of such businesses for dark stained wood usually in a clean modern style which normally proves quite acceptable in a conservation area. Brentwood Borough needs to be more proactive in the application of the excellently drafted policies for shop fronts and advertising in its Replacement Local Plan. There are several places, such as Moores Place and the exterior of The Arcade, where there has been a proliferation of free-standing sandwich boards which should be checked.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance in the High Street tends to be poor, something which detracts from its appearance. One way of attempting to influence the standard of maintenance is to improve the public realm, and so the High Street improvement scheme should address the problem, but there is no guarantee that it would have that effect.

LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

The Replacement Local Plan says that the Borough 'will seek to compile a list of buildings of local or historic interest' (para. 9.57). These should be buildings of good architectural quality, or associated with a noted architect or historic figure, and which make a positive contribution to the appearance of the area in which they are located. There are a large number of buildings in the conservation area which satisfy these criteria. They include:

- The Brentwood School main building by Chancellor on Ingrave Road.
- Brentwood cathedral and associated buildings, i.e. Clergy House, the range of office buildings and Song School
- Wilsons Corner, a landmark department store
- Nos 1-23 High Street, a terrace of three-storey Victorian buildings dating from 1883
- Good inter-War years public houses in the High Street, the Lion and Lamb and the Swan.
- The Post Office in the High Street
- The former Burtons department store
- HSBC bank building of 1924

16. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Note: the unpublished reports cited above can all be found in the Essex Historic Environment Record held at County Hall, Chelmsford.