

**DRAFT  
PROPOSED  
ROMSEY TOWN  
CONSERVATION  
AREA CHARACTER  
APPRAISAL**

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# PROPOSED ROMSEY TOWN CONSERVATION AREA - CHARACTER APPRAISAL

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# THE PROPOSED ROMSEY TOWN CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER - APPRAISAL

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Aims and objectives

This Character Appraisal seeks to define what is special about the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area, and to provide detailed information about its spaces, buildings, landscape, public realm, and other positive features. It also identifies its negative features and provides guidance on enhancement opportunities. If a Conservation Area is designated the Appraisal will be a 'material' document when the Council considers applications for change within, or on the edges of, the proposed Conservation Area.

The proposed Conservation Area lies immediately to the east of the Mill Road and St Matthew's Conservation Area, which forms part of the 'Cambridge Conservation Area No. 1 – Central' which was originally designated in 1969. The Mill Road and St Matthew's Area was added in 1993 when other adjoining parts of Cambridge (the Glisson Road, Station Road and Riverside areas) were also included.

In 1999 the City Council produced a Conservation Area Appraisal for the Mill Road and St Matthew's Conservation Area. This has been reviewed and updated in parallel with preparation of the Appraisal for Romsey.

Given the links and similarities between the two areas, it is not surprising that many of the issues faced by the adjoining Conservation Area can also be found in the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area. This document therefore draws on the earlier document whilst providing an analysis of the unique features of the Romsey Town area.

If there is public support for designating a Conservation Area for Romsey, one option would be to combine Romsey with Mill Road and St Matthews as a single Conservation Area. This would allow Mill Road to be considered as a whole.

### 1.2 Summary of the Special Interest of the Proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area

The proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area covers an area of mainly residential streets which lie at right angles to the north and to the south of the eastern end of Mill Road, one of the earliest roads leading out of the historic core of Cambridge. The west side of the conservation area is bounded by the railway line; the consultants' draft boundary has been amended to take in Mill Road railway bridge with its murals, and the tree-fringed car park west of Great Eastern street. The proposed Conservation Area boundary largely encompasses the extent of terraced housing development as shown on the 1904 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map. Around this boundary, the streets widen and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century grid pattern changes to more spacious layout of paired houses with much larger gardens, typical of the Inter-War period.

Most of the houses are narrow (one or two bays wide) two storey terraced houses built from brick with slate roofs. They mainly date to between 1880 and 1910, and are interspersed with public houses, industrial buildings, stable blocks, and workshops, many now in residential uses. These buildings are notable for their use of brick, timber joinery, slate roofs, and large chimney stacks, often with their original clay pots. Whilst individual groups have slightly varied

details, their overall form, height and relationship to the street gives the area a cohesive and attractive appearance, assisted by the preservation of many of the original details and materials. A large public park between Hemingford Road and Vinery Road provides much needed open space for children to play, and has recently been enhanced with a new play area and sitting-out spaces.

Mill Road itself is in varied commercial uses, the businesses being largely based in late 19th century buildings of varying degrees of quality. Several small churches or chapels remain, plus former schools, community buildings and, almost next door to each other, clubrooms for both the Conservatives and the Labour Party. National shops such as the Co-op, SPAR and most recently Tesco are present but not particularly dominant, being mixed in with a large number of locally-owned and run businesses including cafes, restaurants, and take-aways, reflecting the young and often ethnically diverse local population. On the north-eastern edge of the proposed Conservation Area, Brookfields Hospital is still operating providing a variety of services and retains some historic buildings (one is dated 1883) as well as more recent accommodation which is excluded from the proposed Conservation Area boundary. Also excluded is the site immediately to the west of the hospital, where modern commercial buildings have recently been demolished. In 2007 the City Council produced an urban design strategy for this site called the 'Robert Sayle Warehouse and Co-Op site, Mill Road, Cambridge Development Brief' which set out some possible development options for it, but to date (August 2010) the site remains contained by hoardings with no sign of any activity.

A variety of issues have been identified as part of the Character Appraisal, including the preservation of the historic terraced housing; the need to review the list of Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs); the improvement of the shopfronts and the buildings generally in Mill Road; the control of new development; the care and improvement of the green spaces and trees; the control of satellite dishes; the protection of views into, out of and across the proposed Conservation Area; and the improvement of the public realm. All of these are considered in greater detail in the Management Plan.

### 1.3 National and local planning policy

Conservation Areas are defined as '*areas of architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*' in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Local Planning Authorities are required by the Act to identify the parts of their area that should be designated as Conservation Areas and to formulate and publish proposals to preserve or enhance them. Local authorities must submit proposals for the protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas for public consultation (this can be achieved via the Council's website) and they must also have regard to any views expressed by people responding to this consultation.

Broadly, the effects of designation are:

- Conservation Area Consent must be obtained from the local planning authority or Secretary of State prior to the substantial or total demolition of any building or structure within a Conservation Area, with some exceptions;
- The local planning authority must consider the desirability of *preserving or enhancing* the character and/or appearance of the Conservation Area when assessing planning applications for change in Conservation Areas;
- Permitted development rights are slightly different in Conservation Areas;

- Permission is required from the local planning authority to fell or lop a tree over a certain size.

Central government policy relating to listed buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: *Planning and the historic environment*.

Local planning policy is contained within the Cambridge Local Plan which sets out policies and proposals for future development and land use in Cambridge. This is incrementally being replaced by the emerging Local Development Framework – for more information look at the Council's website: [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)

## 2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 The development of the proposed Conservation Area

The development and growth of Romsey Town mainly took place between 1880 and 1900, and mirrored similar development closer to the City to the west of the railway line, an area which is now the Mill Road and St Matthew's Conservation Area. The proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area lies similarly along the line of Mill Road, an important historic route which leads out of the City Centre towards the eastern edge of Cambridge. The area was still fields until the Inclosure Act of 1807, after which new roads were incrementally laid out at right angles to the main road, although most of these did not appear until the 1880s or even later. Part of the map of 1886 shows, for instance, that Great Eastern Street had been developed with terraced houses and that the adjoining streets – Cavendish Road, Sedgwick Street, Catherine Street and Thoday Street – had been laid out but only a few houses had been built. Beyond these streets were open fields and allotments, crossed by old footpaths that led to the uninhabited Coldhams Lane and Coldhams Common where coprolites were mined. For each terrace, the width of each house was crucial, for if over 15 foot it was possible to provide a separate front hallway, allowing some privacy to the front parlour. Front bay windows were also added to the more up-market houses, often lived in by train drivers, who earned more than the more lowly railway workers. The 1886 maps also confirm the existence of two large houses, both set back from Mill Road – to the north, The Lodge occupied a large site between Cavendish Road and Sedgwick Street (which appears to have been totally redeveloped in the 1920s), and to the south, Romsey House, which may have given its name to the area. This survives on the corner of Coleridge Road and Mill Road and is currently used as a language school.

From the 1880s (one of the remaining buildings is dated 1882) a site to the north of Mill Road was developed as an Isolation Hospital. Now called Brookfields Hospital, after the small stream which runs across the site, further buildings were incrementally added including the largest building which faces Mill Road. This is built using distinctive polychrome brickwork and appears to date to 1892 – it may have been designed by E Wareham Harry, the Borough Surveyor. Other interesting buildings also date to this period, including the Salisbury Club (for the Conservatives), which was built in 1891 by FA Mullet, with a further section being added to the west in 1909. St Philip's Church in Mill Road is dated 1889, and St Philip's School in Ross Street was built close by between 1894 and 1898 to the designs of W M Fawcett. St Philip's Junior School in Thoday Street was built between 1889 and 1894 by J S Redding and Son, Cambridge. In 1891 a new Methodist Church was built on Mill Road to the designs of W Wren of Cambridge – this was later (1906) substantially extended. Of the commercial buildings, the Royal Standard Public House was built in Mill Road around 1880 and was acquired as a public house from Charles Armstrong-Ors by the Star Brewery in 1892. All of these buildings are already on the City Council's list of Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs).

The provision of further houses in the next twenty years, along with shops, schools, churches and other facilities, gave the local residents all they needed. As this was the period when Britain's Empire was at its most powerful, many of the new street names reflected the various countries now under British control, such as Suez, Malta, Cyprus and Hobart. By 1921 the area had over 7,000 residents, most of who worked for the railway as drivers, guards, boilermakers, platelayers, fitters, firemen and clerks. Others men worked in the building industry and some of them helped to build the new Labour Party Clubhouse in Mill Road, which was opened by Ramsey Macdonald in 1928. When many of the residents supported the General Strike in 1926, the area became famous for its strong union membership and

socialist leanings, and was often referred to as 'Red Romsey'. Whilst it lay close to the City Centre, it felt quite isolated from the university buildings, dons and students, with the line of the railway quite literally creating a barrier.

A General Improvement Area (GIA) was declared in Romsey Town in 1981 to encourage property owners to upgrade their terraced houses including the installation of inside toilets, new bathrooms, damp-proofing, and new roofs. Since then, despite some gentrification, the effect of student lets, and the gradual assimilation of families from a range of ethnic backgrounds, a strong community spirit still survives and is reflected in the support for various local groups including an active Residents' Association.



### **3 LOCATION AND SETTING**

#### **3.1 Location and activities**

Cambridge is located in south Cambridgeshire close to the junction of the M11 from London and the A14, which connects Felixstowe to Kettering and further west. The proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area lies between the Mill Road and St Matthew's Conservation Area and the eastern section of the Ring Road (the A1134), to the north-west of Cambridge Station.

Activities within the proposed Conservation Area are mainly residential, with commercial uses focused along Mill Road, although there is an occasional commercial use (public house, small shop or office group) in the residential back streets. C and D Motors in Hope Street is a small back-street garage in a road where other historic buildings may also have been built for industrial or non-residential uses, such as stables. Mill Road is notable for its wide range of independent shops and other facilities; the addition of a Tesco Metro Store in Mill Road in recent years was controversial. There are many cafes, bars and restaurants, mainly aimed at the night-time economy. Many of the shops are owned by families rather than by larger national chains, providing a special character to the area which is further enhanced by the rich ethnic mix. A number of historic public houses can be found within the residential streets, clearly built as part of the initial phase of expansion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. These are particularly supported by the many students who live in the immediate area, as well as providing an important community focus. St Philip's Infants School in Ross Street is now a Community Centre, and on Mill Road, the former Methodist Church is now the Romsey Mill Centre. Brookfields Hospital is still operational but only the remaining historic buildings of the large campus lie within the proposed Conservation Area, facing Mill Road. Some of the former industrial buildings have been converted into offices, or are now residential. There are three active churches – St Philip's Church, Mill Road, the Church of Seventh Day Adventists in Hobart Road and the Mill Road Baptist Church.

#### **3.2 Topography and geology**

The proposed Conservation Area lies on flat, low lying land to the east of the City Centre and to the east and south of the River Cam. There are no special topographical features of any note, apart from a small stream (now largely culverted) which passes across the northern part of the Brookfields Hospital site. The only change in level is provided by the bridge where Mill Road crosses the railway line on the eastern edge of the proposed Conservation Area.

Cambridge lies on a gravel ridge over Jurassic clays suitable for brick making, as seen in many of the buildings in the proposed Conservation Area. In the past, a band of gault clay which lies along the west bank of the River Cam also produced the 'white' bricks which are commonly associated with parts of East Anglia, as well as the local pantiles of varied hues including yellows, browns, pinks and greys. To the south of Cambridge, the southern and eastern parts of the county are chalky, providing the flint, chalk rubble and chalk blocks (in the form of clunch) which was used for some of the early University buildings, bricks gradually taking precedent from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. There is evidence of gravel extraction close to the Mill Road area on historic maps.

#### **3.3 The landscape and urban setting**

The proposed Conservation Area lies in an urban setting to the east of the City Centre, separated from it by the Mill Road and St Matthew's Conservation Area, similarly made up of

streets of late 19<sup>th</sup> century housing. The long north-south line of the railway creates a natural boundary between the two areas, although they are to a degree bound together due to their similar plan form, with Mill Road acting as the key main route for both. To the north and south lie areas of Inter-War housing, notable for their semi-detached houses with more spacious gardens. To the east, the proposed Conservation Area is bounded by mixed development and part of the eastern section of the Cambridge Ring Road (the A1134).

### **3.4 Biodiversity**

The proposed Conservation Area retains an essentially urban character with opportunities for wildlife being limited to private gardens and the Romsey Rec. next to Vinery Road. Outside the proposed Conservation Area, Barnwell Pit and part of Coldham's Common has been designated as a Site of Natural History Interest and together they support a rich fauna and flora including some rare water plants.

## **4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Layout and street pattern**

The proposed Conservation Area encompasses an almost grid pattern of street which mainly lie almost at right angles to Mill Road, which forms the central feature of the layout and which dates to the Roman period. This runs in a roughly east-west direction and passes through the adjoining Conservation Area before crossing the East Road/Gonville Place junction from where it continues straight into the City Centre as 'Parkside'. Mill Road bends gently in the middle of the section which lies within the proposed Conservation Area, providing some drama to views along the street.

The 1886 map confirms that many of the streets were laid out along the boundaries of fields which were incrementally developed for housing from the 1880s onwards. Argyle Road curves slightly, reflecting the line of the old railway line which is shown on the 1906 map. The original alignment of the railway line from Cambridge to Bury St Edmunds passed along the southern limit of the present proposed Conservation Area, providing a barrier to development which is reflected in the clear demarcation between late 19<sup>th</sup> century development and Inter-War development, as shown most clearly in Marmora Road.

Throughout the proposed Conservation Area, the dominant building type is the two storey terraced house, creating long lines of buildings lying directly on the back of the pavement. Although many of the streets were developed in a piecemeal or 'pattern book' way by different builders, it is surprising how cohesive they appear, implying a degree of control by the landowner. Most of the properties have long, thin back gardens of regular size, sometimes accessed by a narrow back alley. There are virtually no detached or semi-detached properties apart from the few which have been added in more recently years, such as the semi-detached pairs of Inter-War houses facing Sedgwick Road. The building layout along Mill Road is far more varied, due to the more commercial uses in this part of the proposed Conservation Area, but the buildings are still mainly two storeys high and are located on or very close to the back of the pavement in terraced form.

### **4.2 Open spaces and trees**

The public park next to Vinery Road is the only public open space in the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area, which is otherwise made up of residential streets or Mill Road itself. The park contains a large grassed area for sports, a children's playground, and a newly enhanced sitting and gathering space which has been stylishly fitted out with seats and other features. The boundaries of the park are defined by mature trees which feature in views into the area. A line of mature trees are particularly important in Vinery Road, where they make a major contribution to the setting of the long terrace of historic houses along the eastern side. A few less significant trees can be seen along the edge of the railway line and around the small car park at the end of Great Eastern Street. Otherwise there are very few mature trees in the proposed Conservation Area, although some may be hidden in private gardens which are not easily visible from the public domain.

Whilst tree species vary, most of the 'public' trees tend to be London plane trees, horse-chestnuts, or silver birch. There are no examples of 19<sup>th</sup> century 'specimen' trees in the proposed Conservation Area. The most significant groups of trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Character Area Maps but because of the difficulties in obtaining access to private land, it is possible that some garden trees have not been recorded. All trees over a

certain size are automatically protected in the proposed Conservation Area from inappropriate lopping or felling.

### **4.3 Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas**

#### Focal points and focal buildings

There are no particular focal points in the proposed Conservation Area, although the public park next to Vinery Road does provide some well used public open space. At the western end of Mill Road, close to the railway bridge, a row of 1930s shops is set back slightly from the road and a wide pavement created which does provide some emphasis to the area. This is enhanced by the popular café which lies within this group.

Whilst none of the residential houses stand out in any noticeable way, there are a number of buildings, all in other uses, which give the streetscape some punctuation and provide views along streets. These buildings are notable for both their size and their high quality architectural detailing and are as follows:

- The former St Philip's Infants' School, now a Community Centre, Ross Street
- St Philip's Church, Mill Road
- The Baptist Church, Mill Road
- The former Methodist Church, now the Romsey Mill Centre
- Brookfields Hospital – front range, Mill Road

There are two 'negative' focal buildings, both modern:

- The Avis Car Centre, Mill Road
- The Cambridge Bed Centre, Mill Road

Another feature is the small number of public houses which are located on prominent corners within the residential back streets. The most notable of these is the Empress Public House on the corner of St Philip's Road and Thoday Street, which is still functioning as a public house. This is typical of terraced housing which often terminated with corner shops or public houses. Others have been converted into houses, largely unobtrusively.

#### Views and vistas

The flat topography and long residential streets which are lined with similar terraced or semi-detached houses do not allow any views out of the proposed Conservation Area apart from minor vistas to the north, east and south to Inter-War development. The railway bridge lies just outside the proposed Conservation Area boundary but does provide views of the terraced houses and trees which lie next to the railway tracks and former railway sidings. Views across the public park are pleasantly framed by mature deciduous trees.

The most obvious views and vistas are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map, but there are lesser views in many other locations which are of equal significance in their contribution, so the omission of any particular view or vista does not mean that it is of no importance.

#### 4.4 The public realm

The 'public realm' covers the public open space, mainly the responsibility of the County Council, between the buildings in the proposed Conservation Area, including street surfaces, pavements, street lighting, street furniture, street name plates and any other features of interest. There are no historic floorscape features apart from a small area of natural stone setts at the entrance to Romsey House, and some granite setts at the northern end of Stockwell Street. However, historic cast iron or enamel street name plates in many locations do add to the interest of the area.

##### Street surfaces and pavements

Modern tarmac is used throughout the proposed Conservation Area for street surfaces, and for many of the pavements in the back streets, although concrete flags and concrete paviors are also evident. Mill Road has been repaved at various times in the past, although the commonest paving material again appears to be concrete slabs or paviors. Some of this paving is in very poor condition. Some historic paving remains on private land, such as in Catharine Street, where the occasional narrow alleyway is paved in blue brick paviors. Small planters (with walls of varying heights) can be seen at the junctions of various roads, put there in the early 1980s as part of a traffic management scheme which has resulted in many of the roads being sealed off to prevent through traffic. Generally the kerbs are concrete, but some narrow (150 mm) granite kerbing remains, sometimes paired with stone gutters of a similar width (e.g. Hope Street).

##### Street lighting

Street lighting is provided by modern light fittings of no special interest, usually grey-painted steel with a glass lantern, which probably date to the 1970s or 1980s. Following recommendations in the 1999 Appraisal of the Mill Road and St Matthew's Conservation Area, new street lighting was installed in the adjoining section of Mill Road using simple but elegant black steel standards with a 'hockey-stick' style of lamp. This could advantageously be continued along Mill Road into the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area.

##### Street furniture

There is no street furniture of any significance, the occasional litter bin or public seat being of varied design. Seats tend to be wood or metal, and litter bins (where they exist) tend to be black cast aluminium in a standard style which can be seen all over Cambridge. Improvements to these elements would be very welcome. There are some well designed seats and other features in the public park next to Vinery Road.

##### Street place names

Many of the original cast iron street name plates remain fixed to corner buildings. They are painted white with black lettering and edging. These are an important feature and whilst they have been replaced in many locations by modern name plates on timber posts, they add to the richness of the streetscene and the owners of the buildings on which they are located should be encouraged to look after them.

##### Other features

Traffic calming measures, probably dating to the early 1980s, have been installed in St Philip's Road and Argyle Road, and in other locations, preventing through traffic. These features, which include planters and trees, are somewhat neglected and in need of replacement or improvement. Timber or steel telegraph poles, with trailing telephone wires, are a little obtrusive in several locations.

## **5 THE BUILDINGS OF THE PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The historic buildings of the proposed Conservation Area are mainly in residential use as family homes rather than flats, with nearly all of the streets being notable for their long terraces or groups of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses. Nearly all of them are two storeys high. The development of the proposed Conservation Area in a relatively short period of time means that these buildings display very similar details and materials, providing the cohesive frontages which make the area special. Further buildings, sometimes on a slightly larger scale, were built for employment-related uses or to provide shops or community buildings. Of note is the occasional back-street public house, as well as the survival of a number of former warehouses and other industrial buildings which together provide the residential streets with variety and interest. Along Mill Road, the purpose-built late 19<sup>th</sup> century shops, and other commercial premises, provide a lively streetscape and make a major contribution to the economic viability of the immediate area. However, many of these buildings have been adversely affected by the installation of poor quality shopfronts, plastic windows, modern roofing materials and other inappropriate alterations.

The predominant building type is therefore the modest two storey terraced house, often only one bay wide, with a simple slated roof facing the street. These are found along Mill Road and in the back streets to either side of it. The slightly higher status examples have single or double height canted bay windows and are slightly wider. In addition, there are a number of mainly late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings which were built for religious, educational, commercial or community uses which were larger and more prestigious than these smaller houses and most of these are now included on the City Council's List of Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs). They are described in greater detail in section 5.2 below. There are no listed buildings in the proposed Conservation Area.

### **5.2 Buildings of Local Interest**

Cambridge City Council maintains a list of Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) which although having no statutory protection, have been given greater prominence due to the guidance which has recently been published in PPS 5 which affects all 'heritage assets' (including BLIs). This provides advice on their preservation and the protection of their setting. The BLIs in the proposed Conservation Area date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and were generally built to provide amenities for local residents as the population of Romsey Town grew rapidly in the 1880 to 1900 period. The BLIs are:

#### St Philip's Church, Mill Road

The church was built in 1889 (datestone) to the designs of E P Loftus-Brock of London, using gault brick (now weathered to a mid-brown). It is a striking corner building with a tall gable facing Mill Road, below which are three Gothic pointed windows, surrounded by polychromatic brickwork decoration. The steeply pitched roof is covered in hand-made clay tiles, and a bell tower with a tall spire is an important feature in views along the road. A modern timber single storey porch, painted bright red, has been added to the Mill Road elevation.

#### St Philip's Vicarage, No. 242 Mill Road

The Vicarage was built in 1903 by Coulson and Lofts of Cambridge. The much altered building sits opposite the church and has been converted into a shop, now the Romsey Town

Post Office. Two storeys high, it is built using gault brick with some red brick decoration to create narrow string courses or eaves details. The windows are modern.

#### Romsey House, No. 274 Mill Road

Romsey House is a substantial detached late 19<sup>th</sup> century neo-Tudor building, built from red brick with timber-framing. It retains a steeply pitched clay tiled roof with tall brick chimney stacks. The windows, which appear to be original, are mainly mullioned and transomed with leaded lights.

#### Royal Standard House Public House, No. 288-290 Mill Road

The Royal Standard, now a restaurant, is a stuccoed building of c1879-81 with a later single storey outshot to the front, possibly reflecting the purchase of the building from Charles Armstrong-Ors by the Star Brewery in 1892. The sash windows have two lights to each sash, and above, there are steeply pitched slate roofs with decorative clay ridge tiles. A carved barge board to the prominent front gable is a feature of note.

#### Brookfields Hospital, Mill Road

The earliest building on the site appears to date to 1882, and is a single storey ward building set back from road. The principal building, facing Mill Road, dates to 1892, and is built from gault brick with red brick dressings, tall chimney stacks in matching brickwork, and a pitched slate roof. The side, front and rear elevations are of irregular design, but united by careful detailing. The building was designed by E Wareham Harry, the Borough Surveyor, with additions of 1914, designed by Julian Julian, also a Borough Surveyor. Chart and Sons of Reading were involved in this later stage. Other interesting details include the mullioned and transomed windows, and a variety of casements. A large terracotta crest is prominently located in the gable overlooking Mill Road, and it would be helpful if the derivation of this crest could be researched.

#### Mill Road Baptist Church, Mill Road

This church was built in 1885 to the designs of Searle and Hayes, London. It is a plain symmetrical brown brick double height building on a corner plot, the most important feature of which is a small bell tower on the steeply pitched slated roof, which provides a focus to views along Mill Road. Facing Stockwell Street, there are five double height windows, and there is a large first floor window on the front elevation with a full width single storey entrance porch below.

#### Romsey Mill Centre, Mill Road

This former Methodist Church dates to 1891 and has been converted to the Romsey Mill Centre and Sure Start Nursery. The original church was designed by W Wren and built by Coulson and Lofts, Cambridge. An extension was added in 1906. The Centre is an asymmetrical building on a prominent corner plot and it is built from gault brick with red brick dressings. The double height windows have been replaced in uPVC.

#### Romsey Town Labour Club, Mill Road

The Labour Club is a single storey red brick building on a corner site. It retains a stone cornice with the wording 'Romsey Town Labour Club', and some Venetian windows to either side of front entrance with rubbed red brick arches. A decorative stone cartouche lies over the panelled double front doors, and the flat roof hidden by a parapet. It was designed by E W Bond.

### The Salisbury Club, Mill Road

This is a three bay building, each bay different but linked by the common use of red brick. The two older bays on the left have large gables, and the third much smaller bay, on the right, has a flat roof and parapet – it probably dates to the 1920s. The original bay on the east end is dated 1891 and was designed by F A Mullet of Cambridge. Called Salisbury House, it retains an ornate gable of five bays, with sweeping copings decorated with ball finials. Below is a central pair of front doors, panelled, and Georgian-style fanlight. There are arched window heads, but the windows on the right have been replaced and made much larger with much smaller original windows on the left, with small panes and slim glazing bars. Brick pilasters add some interest to the facade. The gable in the centre dates to 1909 and is less ornate but it retains its original window openings and double doors.

### Ross Street Community Centre, Ross Street

This was built as an Infants' School in 1894 and 1898 – the architect was W M Fawcett. The rather rambling single storey building is constructed from gault brick with steeply pitched slate roofs with some modern alterations. The windows have all been changed to uPVC. (St Philip's Junior School in Thoday Street was built at a similar time, and was also a BLI, but has been demolished and replaced with School Court).

### No. 21 St Philip's Road

This long thin house was formerly called Argyle Villa and is shown on the 1886 map at a time when there were very few other buildings in the area. It was built for A Sainty, a Great Eastern Railway inspector. The two storey one bay building is constructed from brown brick with a single mullioned and transomed window to the front at ground floor level. The principal feature is the tile hung gable above. The front door is set back from the street on the side elevation, and retains a small open porch with slate roof.

## **5.3 Positive buildings**

In addition to the BLIs, a large number of unlisted buildings have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as being *positive* buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as being *positive* will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the proposed Conservation Area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded. In the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area, most of these buildings date to the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and were built as houses, mainly in terraced form. The survival and continued preservation of these properties, in a relatively unaltered form, is discussed further in the Management Plan.

The identification of these buildings follows advice provided within English Heritage's *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, which provides, at Appendix 2, a helpful list of criteria. A general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a proposed Conservation Area, and any applications for demolition should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings. This implies therefore that all buildings marked as 'positive' on the Townscape Appraisal Map will be retained in the future unless a special case can be made for demolition.



## 5.4 Materials and details

The majority of the buildings in the proposed Conservation Area are terraced two storey houses built between 1880 and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are mainly one bay wide, the larger versions with ground floor canted bay windows and a separate hallway providing access to the rooms at the back of the house. The most common facing material is yellow or white gault brick, sometimes enlivened by the use of red brick, which is used to pick out lintels, string courses, corner quoins, or eaves (Suez Road has some particularly striking examples of polychromatic brickwork). Stone lintels are often painted to contrast with the adjoining brick with decorative features such as ogee curved edges and trefoil motifs. Painted render is also common.

The continuous roofs face the street, often without party wall separation, and are covered in slate. As these houses have relatively low floor to ceiling heights, they are characterised by low eaves which sit only just above the first floor windows. The original brick stacks with clay pots also remain on most of the houses in the proposed Conservation Area. Most of these are decorated with no more than a few courses of corbelled-out brickwork to prevent weathering.

Windows are almost always two over two timber vertically sliding sashes and the front doors are similarly timber of varying designs – panelled (two or four is most common) or simply boarded. Some of these panelled doors have very heavy mouldings. The front doors usually lead straight off the adjoining pavement although a few of the houses have very small front gardens. Many old bootscrapers remain next to the front doors, no longer in use. Great Eastern Street, which retains two long terraces of houses dating to the 1860s or 1870s, provides some examples of flat fronted, gault brick houses with many original front doors remaining. These have two long panels each, with deep mouldings, and a plain fanlight above. It is notable that most of the residential properties in the proposed Conservation Area retain their original joinery, roof materials, and brickwork or render facing.

The buildings along Mill Road are much more varied than the buildings in the residential streets to either side, due to their more mixed uses, although there are some well detailed terraced properties, such as the group opposite Brookfields Hospital, which may have been built for hospital workers. Many of the shops in Mill Road are located in buildings which may once have been in residential use, which have been converted into shops at a later date. Build-outs, to create more ground floor retail space, can be seen in some locations. This retains a more domestic scale to the shopping area, which has few historic buildings of any size apart from the Baptist Church, St Philip's Church and the Romsey Mill Centre. The shopfronts are very varied and often feature modern brightly coloured fascias and lighting. There are no examples of any remaining historic shopfronts, apart from the Old Chemist Shop at no 206, although in places elements of the original details remain such as corbels or pilasters. As with the residential streets, the use of gault brick, usually a yellow or light brown colour, is almost universal. Unlike the residential properties, the buildings along Mill Road have been very altered, and the use of uPVC or other modern equivalents for windows is commonplace.

## 6 NEGATIVE FEATURES

### 6.1 Key Negative Features

The following Key Negative Features have been identified for the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area:

Buildings:

- The residential properties have been well preserved but are threatened by the use of modern materials and details, including inappropriate windows and front doors
- Many of the original slate roofs are now in need of replacement
- Some large roof extensions have been allowed in the past
- Some over-dominant roof lights
- Painting of brickwork

Spatial:

- The former Robert Sayle Warehouse and Co-Op site remains vacant and surrounded by hoardings
- The pressure for inappropriate extensions and alterations to the residential properties
- A number of large advertising hoardings
- The preservation of the historic street name plates
- The demand for on-street car parking
- Poor quality public realm including damaged pavements, untended planters, and damaged street signs
- A certain amount of untidy wirescape with dominant telegraph poles and trailing wires
- The care of the trees in the public park

Mill Road:

- Vacant shops in a number of locations
- Poor quality shopfronts, some using garish colours and poor quality signage
- Poor quality external lighting
- Some of the shops are aimed at the 'night-time' economy so do not open during the day
- Pressure for security shutters on the shopfronts
- Most of the original sash or casement windows on the front elevations have been replaced in uPVC
- The shopping area needs to be enhanced and a sense of place instigated through a series of improvements

Proposed Conservation Area boundary:

- Given that the proposed Conservation Area has only recently been designated, and that the boundary was thoroughly reviewed at that time, no changes are proposed

## 7 ISSUES

### 7.1 Principal Issues

The principal issues for the proposed Romsey Town Conservation Area appear to be:

- *Protecting the character of unlisted residential buildings*

There are many unlisted family dwellings in the proposed Conservation Area which are of very high architectural value but which are vulnerable to unsympathetic changes under a householder's permitted development rights. These include the right to replace windows or front doors using modern materials such as uPVC. The loss of original roof materials and the painting of previously unpainted brickwork are further issues.

- *Preserving and enhancing the unique character of the Mill Road shopping area*

Mill Road was built mainly between 1880 and 1900 and contains a high concentration of unlisted but 'positive' buildings. It is in need of comprehensive improvements to address issues such as the bad condition of some of the buildings, the poor quality shopfronts, the use of modern materials and details for the windows and roofs, the removal of dominant satellite dishes, the poor quality public realm, and the repair or possibly even the redevelopment of several individual buildings.

- *The control of new development*

There are few development opportunities in the proposed Conservation Area due to the layout of the street and buildings, with continuous terraces of groups of houses lining the streets. However, there have been a number of extensions to these buildings, some of them at roof level and highly visible. There are also some late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings which may at some stage benefit from being replaced, including the Cambridge Bed Centre and Avis Car Centre.

- *The care and improvement of the trees*

Mature trees make a very special contribution to the character and appearance of the proposed Conservation Area in a limited number of places, most notably in the public park off Vinery Road. There are also a number of trees, sometimes singly or in small groups, on private land. Proposed Conservation Area designation provides protection for all trees over a certain size, although specific protection can be provided by individual Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The continued protection, enhancement and, where necessary, the replacement of these trees, is an issue for the future management of the proposed Conservation Area.

- *Satellite dishes*

It has been noted how satellite dishes can be seen on the front elevations or front roof slopes of many of the buildings in the proposed Conservation Area, probably erected before the area was designated as a proposed Conservation Area. However, they have a negative impact on the environment.

- *Protection of the views*

Views within the proposed Conservation Area tend to be limited to vistas along streets, or can be found in the public park off Vinery Road, where they focus on the many mature trees. Views across, into and out of the proposed Conservation Area are important and need to be protected. This is covered by Policy of the Cambridge Local Plan.

- *Public realm proposals*

The greatest opportunity for publically funded enhancements can be seen in the Mill Road area, with few opportunities in the residential back streets apart from:

- The traffic calming measures in the back streets are now in need of improvement
- A general need to improve the pavements, replacing concrete paving and improving tarmacadam pavements where they have been left marked by trenching for utility providers
- A general need to improve street lighting
- The putting underground of overhead wires, and the removal of telegraph poles
- The protection of the historic street name plates
- The retention of the historic street signs

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

For further information about historic buildings and Conservation Areas, contact:

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