

Purfleet Conservation Area



Character Appraisal

March 2007





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Introduction

Purfleet Conservation Area was designated in 1985.

The designation of a conservation area should not be seen as an end in itself. It is important that conservation areas are regularly reviewed and the preparation of a character appraisal is a part of this process. An appraisal should be regarded as an opportunity to re-assess a conservation area and to evaluate its special interest and significance. It is the defining of special interest that is the main purpose of the appraisal. The appraisal should also provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about the future of the conservation area through the development of management considerations.

The core of the appraisal is the definition of the special interest of the Purfleet Conservation Area and this is intended to provide a vivid, succinct picture of how it is today together with an evaluation of its key characteristics.

Reference is made to the relevant national and local planning policy framework. An outline is provided of the steps that have been taken to involve the local community and other interested parties in the preparation of the appraisal.

Boundary changes are described and an indication of management considerations provided.

It is emphasised that no appraisal can ever be fully comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.



Planning Policy Framework

A conservation area is an 'area 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*). Designation places certain duties upon local planning authorities. They must review the 'special interest' of their areas from time to time and also consider whether new conservation areas should be designated

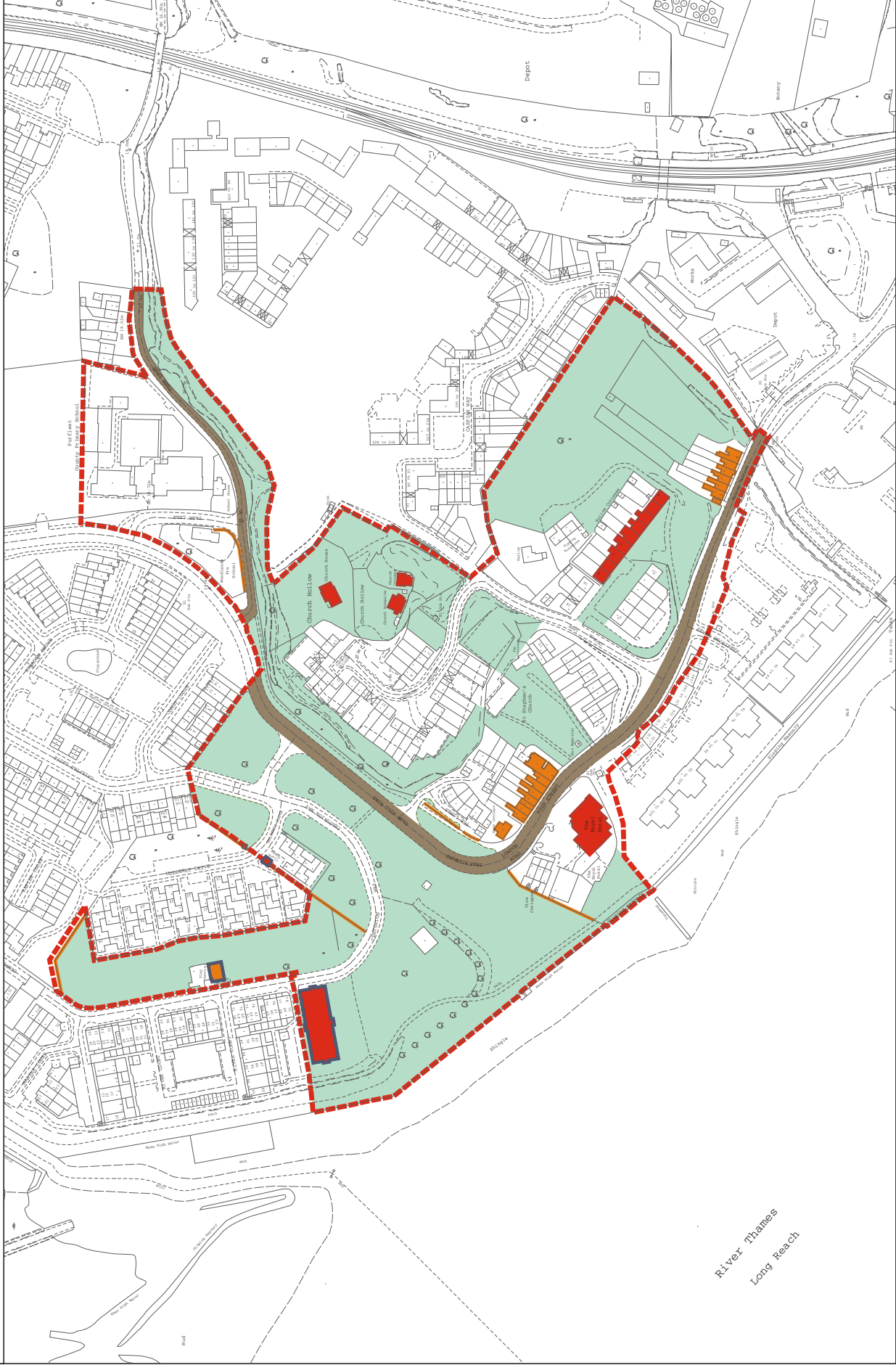
The Adopted Thurrock Borough Local Plan 1997 forms part of the development plan for Thurrock and provides the basis for decisions on land use planning. It contains policies regarding the designation, review and enhancement of conservation areas, together with guidance relating to the control of development within them. These Local Plan policies are outlined in Appendix 1

The Council is currently preparing its *Local Development Framework*. This will be a range of documents containing policies and proposals to guide the future development and use of land in Thurrock up to 2021, including those relating to conservation areas. It will form part of the statutory development plan and will replace the Local Plan.

With regard to the control of development within conservation areas the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995* requires that planning applications be made for certain types of development which are elsewhere considered to be 'permitted development'. This includes various types of cladding; the insertion of dormer windows into roof slopes; the erection of satellite dishes on walls, roofs or chimneys fronting a highway; and the installation of radio masts and antennae. The size of house and industrial extensions that may be carried out in conservation areas without a specific grant of planning permission is also more restricted.

Purfleet Conservation Area Character Appraisal - Special Interest

(not to scale).



Legend:

- Significant open space
- Listed Building
- Significant physical/built form

- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Highways of historic significance

- Conservation area boundary



n.b. detailed information regarding listed buildings or the scheduled ancient monuments should be verified separately

Special Interest of Purfleet

1. Origins and historic development

There is significant evidence of early human activity in the Purfleet area. Many worked flints and tools dating from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods have been found. Pottery from between the Bronze Age and Roman periods has also been discovered.

Chalk extraction took place in the vicinity of Purfleet from the 16th century onwards and had a significant impact upon the landscape. In the 18th century the Whitbread family, owners of the chalk quarries, developed a planned village at Purfleet. The Whitbread Estate included Church House, Church Bungalow and Church Cottage all built within a previously extracted area (Church Hollow). The existing terraces Hollow Cottages and Botany Terrace were also originally part of the Whitbread Estate. Whitbread House was demolished to make way for the existing St Stephen's church and The Parsonage.



19th century map of Purfleet

A significant building in Purfleet is the Royal Hotel, built in the 18th century. This was originally a house and subsequently became 'The Ship', 'The Bricklayers Arms' and in the 19th century the 'Purfleet Hotel' when Purfleet became a fashionable visitor attraction. It took on the name Royal Hotel allegedly following a visit from the Prince of Wales.



Purfleet gunpowder magazines



Chapman & Andre map (1777)

An explosion at the Woolwich Garrison resulted in the construction of a magazine at Purfleet in the 18th century. Purfleet became the receiving house where all gunpowder used by the government was landed by barge, examined, tested and, if approved, stored.

Five large gunpowder magazines were built close to the Thames within approximately 25 acres of ground occupied by the government, which was moated round and walled. One of the magazines remains together with evidence of the inner and outer security walls. A clock tower at one of the four entrances and a proof house (barrel store) also remain.

The historic military garrison use ceased during the 1970's and the majority of the buildings were demolished. They were replaced by the substantial new residential development of the Garrison Estate.

Upon the cessation of chalk extraction, the quarries adjacent to Purfleet (The Dipping) were used as an oil storage depot. Towards the end of the 20th century the storage use ceased and the tanks were eventually demolished. The area is presently being developed for residential purposes. A variety of industrial and commercial uses established themselves on the banks of the Thames close to the village centre. The uses also ceased operating towards the end of the 20th century and the sites were redeveloped for residential purposes.

2. Character analysis

General character and settlement form of Purfleet

The riverside green

The riverside green is a substantial riverfront open space which has wide views across the River Thames to Kent and upriver to Canary Wharf. It rises up the escarpment slope to the ridge to the north. There are avenues of mature trees, which are important to the river front to the west of the riverside green and further up the hill towards the hilltop. There is a 20th century community hall to the west of the riverside green and it is crossed by the primary route of Tank Hill Road and also Centurion Way providing access to the housing to the west.



Riverside green and view upriver from Purfleet

The riverside green is framed by -

i. to the east

The riverside walkway, which itself is framed by the 18th century three-storey Royal Hotel which is a listed building (LB) and its plain single and three storey 20th century attachments. The recent planting of this area has failed. There is a flint faced and brick capped wall which frames the east side of the green. It is interrupted for the entry to the High Street. Mature trees to the rear rise above the edge wall. The ancient lane, Tank Lane, forks to the east, and proceeds on the ridge of the former chalk quarry.

Initially it is wide enough to be an access road and is partially framed to the north by the former outer garrison wall. Tank Lane gives access to the early 20th century Edwardian arts and crafts educational buildings to the north. This area is crowned by mature trees, which are on the crest of the hill.



Royal Hotel

ii. to the west

The garrison inner wall rises up the slope to the entrance gateway and Clock Tower. The modern access road, Centurion Way, has been cut into the slope and has steep banks. There is some single storey modern housing south of the gateway and fronted by a mature avenue of trees. To the north, the modern housing follows the line of the edge of the former garrison ground and the line of the outer wall. Towards the riverside walk is a copse of mature trees on top of an earth mound.

Tank Lane

Tank Lane is wide enough to be an access track to a few 20th century houses on the north side and then narrows as a footpath along the higher ground above the quarry cliff face, to the east. The high chalk cliff face on the south side of the lane is a visually strong part of the character of Purfleet Conservation Area and has historical importance with regard to quarrying activities.



Chalk cliff face under Tank Lane

The Purfleet Garrison

The government moved the Royal magazine to Purfleet in the 18th century. The No. 5 Magazine (LB), the Proof House (Barrel Store) and the Clock Tower (LB) are scheduled ancient monuments. Along with the wall, they are the primary residual structures of the Purfleet Garrison. The magazines were located on the level and at right angles to the wharf. The Proof House (Barrel Store) is located to the rear and is set into the escarpment bank, within a strong group of mature trees. The buildings are constructed of 18th century dark red brick and are of government engineering quality to withstand and contain explosion. The Clock Tower surmounts the gateway in the wall and is an 18th century structure constructed in stock brick. The doors are in cast iron frames.



No.5 Magazine, Proof House (Barrel Store) and Clock Tower

High Street

The High Street is framed by -

i. north side

On the northwest corner, set behind a small garden, is the 19th century arts and crafts style Rose Cottage.



Rose Cottage

The Whitbread family developed a relatively small industrial estate here in the 19th century. To the east and set on the edge of the pavement, is the 19th century terrace nos. 1 to 7 High Street. Beyond are the open green and the war memorial within the churchyard for the St. Stephen's church. Behind this is a 20th century housing estate tucked within the mature trees and to the north of this, within Church Hollow, are the late 18th century stock brick Church House (former chapel) (LB), Church Cottage (former schoolmaster's house) (LB) and Church Bungalow (former schoolhouse) (LB), which are no longer occupied and have become derelict. They sit in a hollow with the quarry cliff rising to the northwest.



1 to 7 High Street

To the east, and set back from the High Street, surrounded by an important mature tree group and accessed by a descending narrow track are the 19th century almshouse character Hollow Cottages (LB) fronting onto a communal green.



Hollow Cottages

A little further to the east and set at the edge of the pavement to London Road is the 19th century Botany Terrace.



Botany Terrace

ii. south side

Whilst the north side of the High Street is rich in the remaining spaces and buildings of the Whitbread Estate, the south side is now enclosed by 21st century riverside linked development. To the rear of the Royal Hotel, the garden is not screened and although the mature trees are retained, a lower car park has been introduced.

Building materials and details in Purfleet

In Purfleet buildings were largely constructed from the 18th century. Essentially these are all brick walled buildings.

The present external appearance of many of these earlier original buildings owes their external surface character from the later more prosperous 18th and 19th centuries.

The basic building forms with later detail changes give Purfleet Conservation Area its varied sense of historic detail, with the exception of the majority of the 20th century buildings and additions. Although the use of locally sourced materials and skills unites the character of the historic vernacular structures to give them their special interest, the government buildings used the best materials and sourced them nationally.

In addition to the historic building forms, walls, roofs, doors and windows, the materials and details also have special interest.

Brick

Hand made bricks come into use as external walling in the 18th century (red brick) and in the 19th century (yellow stock or grey gault brick).

Until the later 19th century lime mortar was used. In the 20th century, re-pointing and repair often uses detrimental cement based mortar.

In the late 19th and early 20th century cement and machine made bricks became available as a walling material.

Although previously lime render and weatherboard had been used to reduce the penetration of damp on traditional buildings, with the availability of expanded metal lath some buildings were encased in cement render.

Industrially produced materials such as asbestos and concrete tiles also came into use in the 20th century. Due to their interlocking, lower pitched roofs than before were constructed.

All of these forms contribute to the interest and character of Purfleet Conservation Area although not all are externally visible.

Community involvement

Involving the local community and raising public awareness has been an integral part of the process of preparing the character appraisal.

This took the form of sending consultation letters to all residents and occupants in the Conservation Area requesting views on the following-

- What features are important to Purfleet Conservation Area and make it special
- What adds to the character
- What takes away from the character

Included with the consultation letter was a questionnaire together with a plan of the Conservation Area and a summary of the considered character and possible issues.

In addition, the entire public consultation process took place online on the Council's website. Notice of the public exhibitions was given in the local press.

Purfleet Community Forum was consulted, as were local ward members, the MP and other interested parties.

An exhibition with historic maps, photographs and documents was held on 4th and 5th October 2006 at Purfleet Heritage Centre, No 5 Magazine, Purfleet where Officers were available to talk through issues and answer questions.

The consultation responses affirmed the following issues:

- The importance of the designated Conservation Area
- The possible expansion to include other areas of special interest
- Involvement of the public in the process of character appraisals
- Involvement of the public in the production of management proposals
- The preservation and management of the special issues
- Any new proposal should respect and not detract from the existing character

Boundary changes

An important aspect of the appraisal process is the consideration of where the boundary of the Conservation Area should be drawn. The appropriateness of current boundaries should be regularly reassessed, perhaps on a five-year cycle (*Guidance on conservation area appraisals – English Heritage 2006*).

Two boundary changes have been made to Purfleet Conservation Area -

- The Proof House (Barrel Store) is a scheduled ancient monument. This building and the surrounding treed slope have been included within the Conservation Area. There are three buildings of the 18th century Purfleet Garrison complex remaining, all of which are scheduled ancient monuments. However, only the No.5 Magazine and the Clock Tower were within the original Conservation Area. It is consistent to include all of the components of special architectural and historic interest in the Conservation Area.
- On the top of the north cliff of The Dipping, Tank Lane is within the original Conservation Area. The quarry face is an important visual and historic feature. The most visible part, the cliff face itself, has been included within the Conservation Area. In addition, the Conservation Area has been extended to include part of Tank Lane (to the eastern end of the adjacent housing to the north)

Management considerations

Conservation Areas are living environments, which are inevitably subject to change and evolution. The original character of some buildings in the Purfleet Conservation Area has already been altered, through for example replacement windows and concrete roof tiles.

It is important to try and prevent the erosion of the essential character of the Conservation Area as a result of inappropriate changes. Exposed and prominent boundary treatments in the Conservation Area are important and their alteration has the potential to be a problem.

The Council will consider the production of design guidance with regard to matters of the nature outlined to assist residents and landowners in their choices.

Once a conservation area is designated, additional planning controls can be introduced by limiting permitted development rights through the issue of an Article 4(2) direction under the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995*.

Planning permission would then be required for the works that are specified. There is no intention at this stage to consider use of an Article 4 direction. Nevertheless the Council reserves the right to consider use of a direction in the future if it is deemed necessary and appropriate to control serious loss of character.

In the event that such a decision is taken, there would be a formal process of notification and opportunity for those affected to support or object to the proposal.

It is intended to produce Management Proposals for Purfleet Conservation Area. The Management Proposals will outline general and specific issues relevant to the Conservation Area and may include recommendations for action.

Appendix 1 – Thurrock Borough Local Plan 1997 – Conservation Area policies

BE22 – Conservation Areas – Designation, Review and Enhancement

'The Council will regularly review conservation area boundaries, amend them when necessary and examine the need to designate new conservation areas using the following broad criteria to assess the special interest of areas:

- (i) The origins and development of the topography of the area;*
- (ii) Archaeological significance and potential;*
- (iii) Prevalent building materials, character and hierarchy of spaces;*
- (iv) The quality and relationship of buildings in the area including the contribution of unlisted buildings;*
- (v) The contribution made by trees and other green features.*

Using the above criteria, the Council will also formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas'.

BE23 – Development affecting Conservation Areas

'Development proposals within, adjacent to, or affecting the Borough's conservation areas will be expected to preserve and enhance their character or appearance. The Council will not permit any development that would be in conflict with this objective.

In this regard, special attention will be paid to the following:

- (i) The retention and protection of all buildings, whether listed or not, trees and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of that area;*
- (ii) The position of new buildings, which should enhance the character and appearance of the area and be in scale and harmony with the adjoining buildings and the area as a whole;*
- (iii) The use of materials, which should be appropriate to the area and sympathetic to adjoining buildings.*

The desirability of preserving or enhancing the area will also be taken into consideration by the Council in the handling of development proposals which are outside the area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area.'

BE-23A-Demolition in Conservation Areas

'The Council will not grant consent for the total or substantial demolition of a building in a conservation area unless it can be shown to their satisfaction that the building is wholly beyond repair; incapable of reasonably beneficial use; or where its removal would enhance the character or appearance of the area.

If necessary, the Council will impose a condition on the grant of any consent providing that any development shall not take place before a contract for carrying out the works of redevelopment on the site has been granted for the development for which the contract provides.'

BE24-Article Four Directions in Conservation Areas

'In exceptional circumstances, including where there are real and specific threats to the character of the conservation area, and subject to approval by the Secretary of State, the Council will make direction under article 4 of the General Development Order to restrict permitted development rights in conservation areas.'

Appendix 2-Listed Buildings in the Purfleet Conservation Area as shown in the 17th list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (as at January 2007)

CENTURION WAY
No 5 (Government Powder Magazine)

Grade II

Removed to Purfleet from Greenwich from 1760 onwards. Circa 1800, powder magazine in grey stock brick, with grey slate roof. Stone capped gables. Central louvre in semi-circular recess. Dentilled eaves course. Twelve slit windows in flank walls. Flat topped porches at end and sides with segmental headed arches to doors.

CENTURION WAY
Clock Tower

Grade II

Circa 1800. Clock Tower, in yellow stock brick. Lower stage with round headed arch, in each face, stone band over with square panelled brick stage above. Roof surmounted by square pedimented stage, with circular clock faces. Square bell turret over with square dome and weathervane.

CHURCH HOLLOW
Church House

Grade II GV

Built 1791 as a chapel, converted into a dwelling in C20. Painted brick with grey slate roof. Two storeys Three window range, modern casements. Windows are set in recessed panels, with semi-circular arched heads. String course and dentilled eaves course.

CHURCH HOLLOW
Church Bungalow

Grade II GV

Former Schoolhouse, built in 1790. In grey stock brick, part painted, with grey slate hipped roof. Single storey. Three window range, casement, with semi-circular heads, set in recessed full height panels, with semi-circular heads, and panels of knapped flint beneath cills.

CHURCH HOLLOW
Church Cottage

Grade II GV

Former schoolmaster's house built in 1790. In painted brick with grey slate roof. One storey and attics. Parapetted verges. Two window range C19 casements. Two C19 flat roofed dormers. Central entrance door, and end wall chimney stacks.

CHURCH HOLLOW
Hollow Cottages

Grade II

Built 1790, altered in mid C19 and C20. Terrace of 12 cottages, reduced to 6 in mid C19, by making one unit out of two. Grey stock brick and red plain tile roof. Single storey. Twelve window range, C19 oriel bays, with glazing bars, and C20 metal casements. Grey brick chimney stacks. Extended in mid C19, by 2 similar units, with lower pitch roof clad in modern plain tiles. Four window range, oriel bays. C20 gabled 2 storey extension at west end.

LONDON ROAD
Royal Hotel

Grade II

Early C19 house in rendered brick with grey slate roof. Three storeys. Five window range, C19 double hung vertical sliding sashes, in plain reveals. Plain parapet, central 3 bays raised up, with horizontal capping. Two storey balcony, part infilled, with slender stucco piers to ground floor, cast iron supporting posts to first floor. Tented lead roof with valance. Extensive modern extension on west and north sides.

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