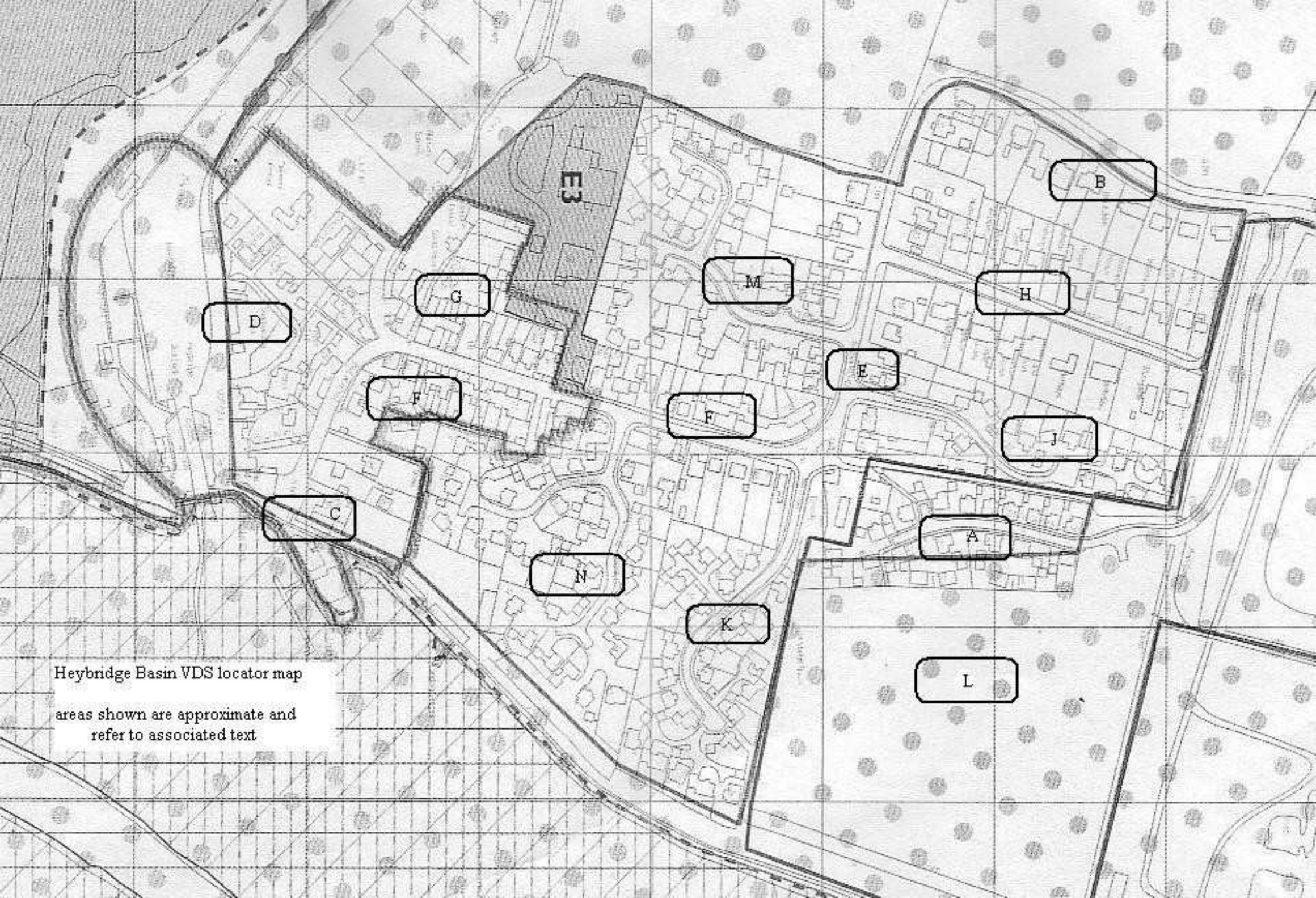
HEYBRIDGE BASIN VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

Produced by the Heybridge Basin Conservation Society
On behalf of the residents of Heybridge Basin

November 2006



Heybridge Basin VDS locator map

areas shown are approximate and refer to associated text

HEYBRIDGE BASIN VDS TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Foreword
- Introduction
- Historical background
- Settlement Pattern
- Chronology of VDS
- Questionnaire and how results related to VDS
- Design guidelines
- Heybridge Basin village by area
- Approaches
- Riverside
- The Basin and canal side, heart of the village
- Basin Road to the bus stop
- Basin Road to Lock Hill
- Chapel Lane and old chapel
- Harfred Avenue
- The Stiles
- The Colliers
- St George's Close
- Blackwater Close and Burrswood Close
- Maritime Way and Spinnaker Drive
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This village design statement provides a detailed description of the village of Heybridge Basin, its unique character, and the important features of its design and history. Design guidelines are provided for how the existing features should be reflected due to future development. This statement also identifies the physical qualities and characteristics of the village and its surroundings which are valued by its residents, and includes particular features which they would like to conserve and protect.

This village design statement is about managing change in the village, not preventing change.

WHY PUBLISH A VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT FOR HEYBRIDGE BASIN?

The pressure of development in Heybridge Basin is likely to be sustained over an extended period. It is not unusual to find a degree of cynicism amongst residents when planning decisions are made, apparently without consultation with or sensitivity to local residents' concerns. This statement is intended to provide an input to the beginning of the planning process and to guide from the outset developments within the village.

HOW WILL THIS STATEMENT WORK?

This village design statement describes Heybridge Basin in three main ways: The village and its setting, the development of the overall settlement, and the characteristics of the buildings and spaces in the various areas of the village.

The village has been divided into its main sections geographically and each section is described as it stands and as intended development might fit into its area; not all sections are suitable for any type of development. This statement helps the Local Authority Planning Officers appreciate the sort of change and its possible location within the village and has been considered alongside the existing Local Plan and planning guidelines currently applicable.

This statement will influence future development within Heybridge Basin and following approval its content becomes a 'material consideration' in the determination of planning applications and a positive influence upon growth and change.

HOW HAS THIS STATEMENT BEEN PREPARED?

To form part of the local planning process, it is essential that this statement reflects the views of the village and not just of the small team of people charged with its production. This statement is the result of several village-wide meetings and consultations of various kinds, including:

Public meetings, workshops and village inspection tours; the distillation of comments made on a village-wide questionnaire, circulated to every resident in the village; stakeholder group meetings representing various activities and organisations within the village, and a number of meetings with the Local Authority Planning Officers and the Rural Community Council of Essex

The preparation and analysis of the questionnaire and the final document preparation and consultation activities were organised by the Heybridge Basin Conservation Society and a number of dedicated residents.

The questionnaire was based on templates used by both Chignalls and South Hanningfield in the preparation of their respective Village Design Statements.

Timetable

The following timetable follows the development of Heybridge Basin Village Design Statement from original concept to presentation to Maldon District Central Area Panning Committee.

	2006
Heybridge PC agrees to support production of Heybridge Basin VDS:	16 March
Heybridge PC votes to make grant to VDS costs:	27 April
Initial Village meeting and workshop:	6 May
Decision taken to proceed with VDS:	6 May
Heybridge Conservation Society voted to take lead:	6 May
Consultation period to develop questionnaire:	10 May to 8 June
Questionnaire distributed and collected:	21 June- 7 July
Number crunching and analysis:	8 July-10 August
VDS first draft produced and circulated to project group:	20 September
Village meeting called to receive draft VDS and agree to proceed:	25 September
Village Design Statement presented to MDC Planning Department:	15 November 2006
Consultation period	January/February 2007
Presented to MDC members for approval	March 2007

FOR WHOM IS THIS STATEMENT INTENDED?

Development in Heybridge Basin is not only about new buildings; it is also linked to the 'look and feel' of our village which can be materially affected by such small changes as alteration of open space use, extensions of existing houses, window and door replacement and changes to outside walls and hedges.

This statement gives guidance to anyone considering or overseeing development within the village envelope. Interested groups or persons would include: Local householders, local businesses and maritime activities, County and District planning authorities, historic building advisors, the Parish Council, architects and planners and builders and developers, specially those from outside the local area.

Copies of this plan have been sent to every householder in Heybridge Basin and also have been lodged with the Local Authority Planning Department. Further copies are available from the Heybridge Basin Conservation Society or Maldon District Council website: htpp://www.maldon.gov.uk

This statement is available to those wishing to apply for planning permission or to study the character of a proposed development from the Maldon District Council Planning Department.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THIS STATEMENT?

This village design statement explains:

The history of the village and its development over time; the character and setting of the village; how the village links with its nautical activities and sailing facilities; the character of individual areas in the village; the nature and characteristics of buildings and open spaces and other features regarded as important by the villagers.

Where appropriate, design guidelines are included and summarised. These, along with the accompanying text and pictures, are linked to existing Planning Policy and also incorporate the views of the people who live in Heybridge Basin and what they value and wish to retain.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the late 1700s, various commercial interests saw benefit in constructing a means of economically transporting commercial goods from the coast to Chelmsford, the County Town of Essex. Their interests resulted in an Act of Parliament; a canal was constructed from Collier's Reach to Chelmsford following its Royal Assent on 19 April 1793. Prior to this time, the Heybridge Basin area was simply empty farmland and marsh; a path ran to the coast near where now sits the Canal lock from nearby Goldhanger Road.

The construction of the canal took three years; in 1796, the first Brig carrying commercial goods made its way to Chelmsford. The original development of the village centred about the canal lock and turning basin; a pub and accommodation for the canal workers appeared two years later and by 1810 a significant number of houses, shops and commercial premises are recorded. These occupied the current conservation area and were shortly followed by a number of other buildings. Two of the original pubs, the Jolly Sailor and the Old Ship, continue to serve the village.

The first sea wall was constructed in 1811, and a year earlier the path from Goldhanger Road was made up as an access road for the settlement; in the following thirty year period the commercial viability of the canal fostered growth and a school, chapel, and other community facilities were built. During this period, however, the railway had also made its appearance; the slow transfer of goods transport from canal to rail had begun by the mid 1800s, and by the end of the 19th Century the village found itself in commercial decline. Several pubs closed, and development was curtailed sharply. This original area is now a designated conservation area, and a chapel, customs house, and other buildings remain as historical features.

In the early 1900s, the village saw a revival as sawmills, shipwrights, and retail sales and distribution were all established and growth was slow but steady until the outbreak of World War I. Following the onset of those hostilities, village growth stopped until the early 1920s when further commercial activities began, buildings

constructed for military purposes during the war were re-located to Heybridge Basin, and commercial shipping and the canal further developed. This development was again curtailed by the onset of World War II.

Following the end of World War II, the village began to develop into what is seen today; commercial shipping again found its way into the canal, the sawmills and shipwright activities expanded, and a new lock was constructed to accommodate larger ships and their cargo. These commercial activities injected a stability into the village, and development during that period was largely concerned with facilities supporting ship repairs and production of timber.

In 1972, the last commercial shipping entered the canal; from that time until the end of the 20th century, the village has seen a transfer of nautical activities from commercial to leisure use, the sawmills close, and ship repair and building activities diminish. 1972 also marked the first of a number of housing estate developments with the original part of Blackwater Close; this estate was closely followed by Colliers Reach, The Stiles, Maritime Avenue and latterly an extension to Blackwater Close and an associated area, Burrswood.
The last estate area to be developed is that located to the North of St. George's Church adjoining the now-adopted village recreational field and playground.

Today, there is an active leisure boating and sailing presence in the village, and much commercial activity centres about the yachting community which is made up not only of yachtsmen calling from other ports on the East coast and abroad but also of local sailors who moor within and sail from the canal itself. This activity supports several boat repair works and the riverside also hosts a café and artist's shop as well as two public houses. With an expansion of population during the last 20 years to at least double the earlier figure, much of today's resident population travels away from the district for employment.

THE VILLAGE AND ITS SETTING

Geographical location

End of Basin Road and sea wall; conservation area

Heybridge Basin is a village with limited history and was initially the product of the construction and commercial development of the canal which extends from the Blackwater estuary to Chelmsford, some 14 miles distant. During the first one hundred and fifty years of its life, development was centred upon marshland lying about the canal basin and its associated lock and consisted of cottages and houses to serve the working population and visiting sailors. The last fifty years, following the cessation of commercial activity in the canal, has seen housing development making use of the land previously used to support shipbuilding, production of timber, commercial fishing and similar nautically-linked activities.

The village of Heybridge Basin is naturally enclosed by the canal, its lock and the associated sea wall which form the South and East boundaries, and by flood relief drainage ditches, a sailing club and its associated training lake and facilities to the North. The Western boundary is formed by agricultural land. It is served by only one road, which extends half a mile to a further minor road extending from Heybridge eastwards to other villages which lay alongside the north bank of the Blackwater estuary.

Beyond the Western boundary there is green belt of over a mile in width which serves as a physical barrier between the village and other development of any kind; there are no footpaths from the village to any nearby built-up areas. A protective sea wall provides walking access to caravan parks to the East over a mile distant and beyond; the westerly extent of the sea wall terminates some two miles distant in Heybridge. There is a canal towpath which runs roughly parallel with this westerly extension of the sea wall and also terminates in Heybridge.

Surrounded by the original marshland and open pasture, the village nestles within a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest which reflect the original habitats of

birds, small animals, and plants which inhabit areas adjacent to tidal regions; prior to the initial development of the canal these lands were in effect tidal marsh, and following the construction of the protective sea walls much of the open land retains these characteristics.

The character of the land lying about the canal and nearby and which now forms the built environment of the village, gives rise to a susceptibility from fluvial flooding, since the area forms a natural catchment for rainwater-flows from the North and West. Although there has been no recorded flooding due specifically to sea overtopping of the existing protective dykes, this possibility continues to be a concern. Original development included drainage ditches able to absorb much of water runoff (and, if required, sea water flooding) and ran through sluices into the estuary; building infill during the last fifty or so years has compromised to a significant extent this infrastructure and has resulted in a number of buildings with levels which are now below those considered to be acceptable for the prevention of flooding both from fluvial runoff and from high sea levels.

This geographic isolation has played a significant part in the development of the village character, both socially and physically. Remote from any other settlement and naturally bounded on three sides by the waterside and by fields, which cannot provide extension of its built environment, the village has developed a unique character during the two hundred years of its life.

Landscape

The single access to the village is by a minor road (Basin Road) from a further minor road extending along the North side of the Blackwater estuary from Heybridge to the sea some 20 miles to the East. This road is naturally terminated at the seaward end of the canal and its associated sea wall and lock. The road is flanked by drainage ditches hedges and trees and runs through open land until its entry into the village boundary about a quarter of a mile from its junction with the coast road. Following its entry into the village, a road extends to the left and serves the latest estate development in the village; along Basin Road itself, strip development primarily of bungalows and two-storey detached houses of more recent construction feature along its Eastern side for a further similar distance until the road bears sharply to the left and enters the Northerly portion of the built-up area.

Basin Road then proceeds Easterly a further quarter mile, turns sharply to the right, and follows a path into the earlier part of the village until it approaches the canal area; it then turns again sharply to the left and after a short distance ends at the sea wall escarpment. All access to properties within the village are by means of this single road from which other roads providing short cul-de-sac access extend to specific built-up areas, each of which stems from a single development project and hence tends to present a common architectural character.

Throughout the village, there are a significant number of single-storey buildings and cottages of early origin, and other houses of two-storey detached construction. There is a commonality of low roof line, open gardens, and a general feeling of space and

lack of cramped or high density development. Trees and hedges abound giving a 'green' aspect to the village overall.

Settlement pattern

The village can be divided into several areas according to the age design and location of each. Although collectively the village presents a cohesive built environment there are differences stemming from age and original use of buildings, which form a common theme.

Centred about and adjacent to the canal and its basin and the associated lock facilities are the early buildings; most of which were erected near to and as part of the canal and its commercial activities; this early area now comprises the conservation area of the village. Construction is varied, from brick to traditional Essex siding construction and uses range from residential to commercial. This area forms the core of the village and includes two pubs, cottages intended originally to serve the needs of the canal itself, and buildings originally constructed for commercial purposes but latterly converted to dwellings. The density is low, and the size and placement of the buildings is in keeping with the aspects presented by the canal and its associated sea wall.

Extending from the conservation area along Basin Road and extending to the North lies an area which contains buildings fronting the road most of which were residential cottages for staff; a former village shop, dairy, and butcher's shop (now converted to residential use) may also be found. Behind this area of strip development along Basin Road both to the East and to the West lay commercial premises used for shipwrights and maintenance and for timber working and these areas remained undeveloped residentially until the late 1970s. This served to concentrate early development into an area which itself determined the nature of construction which was used, and which complemented the similar constraints found in the area adjacent to the canal itself.

Northern area of village along Basin Road

The Northern part of the village includes a private road and its associated strip development; this area (Harfred Avenue) has been to a significant degree self-contained and is primarily an area of detached dwellings each with an ample allocation of garden. Originally remote from the rest of Heybridge Basin and its activities, it has been incorporated within the community as development of the orchards and gardens between that area and the rest of the village along the original stretch of Basin Road has taken place.

Basin Road extends from the canal and waterside area north to the village church, St. George's. The Church dates from the end of World War I and in essence marked (apart from the isolated 'private' development in Harfred Avenue) the Northern end of the village for some years. During the 1970's land adjacent to this area, formerly market gardens and latterly allotments and orchards, was developed for residential purposes and two estates, The Stiles and The Colliers resulted. These areas now in large part form the Northern end of the community and represent, by virtue of their location and common style, an identifiable sector of village development. They are characterised by reasonably uniform two-storey houses of a detached nature with intervening gardens and access via gravelled shared-use paths. Again, these developments present an open aspect with much of a 'green' character and little feeling for cramped or high-density development.

Lying between the developments of The Stiles and The Colliers, and the Northern boundary of the village and its traditional bungalows and infill two-storey houses is an estate, the first to be developed outside the original village envelope of the canal area and its adjacent strip development along Basin Road. This estate, originally Blackwater Close and latterly expanded to include Burrswood Close, was constructed in the early 1970s upon land originally used by and adjacent to the timber works which originally occupied the whole of the Westerly sector of the village. Although developed over a period of some 15 years, the housing is again of a common style which emphasises detached dwellings, open aspects to gardens, and much of a 'green' component, ranging from trees to hedges and large bushes. The area again emphasises the common village aspect of space, greenery, and low-profile independent house design.

Between the original cottages along Basin Road and extending from the current conservation area to the sea wall may be found another estate, which comprises some 20 houses alongside and accessed by two cul-de-sacs. Also constructed as a single project, the dwellings are randomly located within the development area, of common design principles, and present an aspect of space, much 'greenery', and detached dwellings. The estate is constructed up to the sea wall escarpment and extends to a point adjacent to the earlier Colliers development, forming a development continuity from the canal itself to the Northerly extent of village development alongside the sea wall. Buildings within this area have in common significant amounts of garden space and hedge and tree placement; in common with other village areas, the area presents an open 'green' and uncluttered aspect.

Lying alongside the sea wall and to the North of the village built-up area is the only open space contained within the village and available for public use; this area, known as St. George's Field, was developed in conjunction with the construction of the last tranche of housing in the community. 22 detached dwellings were constructed just after the turn of the last century and occupy the Western end of what was an extended marsh and pasture; the balance of the field was dedicated to open space use and forms a structured play area as well as providing open space for general leisure use. The St. George's houses are accessed by a dedicated cul-de-sac, which extends along the Northern boundary of the village from Basin Road to the development, approximately mid-way between Basin Road and the sea wall. Although rather more cramped in space than other developments, the aspect and emphasis throughout the development is one of space and 'green' areas. Its remote placement from the village

in terms of location and access tends to isolate the area from the balance of the community and what architectural discontinuity might be present is correspondingly suppressed.

Questionnaire and how the results led to the development of Design Guidelines

The questionnaire was developed by residents who made up a project team and was based on proven designs used in the production of the Chignalls and South Hannigfield Village Design Statements. After a development and refining period during which Maldon District Council Planning Department and the Rural Community Council for Essex were consulted, the questionnaire was printed and hand-delivered to every household in Heybridge Basin in June of 2006.

Completed questionnaires were collected by hand in June and the results analysed. This analysis provided the basis of the design Guidelines that follow. 304 responses were received from 153 of the 230 Households in the village giving a 65% response rate**.** This is apparently a much higher response rate than for similar questionnaires conducted for other village design statements and indicates the high degree of engagement in the process by the residents of Heybridge Basin.

The high response rate and consensus in many of the replies, together with the community involvement in the whole project through attendance at meetings and workshops, can only strengthen the value of the Heybridge Basin Village Design Statement in determining future development activity in and around the village.

Thirty questions asked residents' perception of the village, the good and bad points and what their preferences were in terms of design and future development in and around the village.
Questions were grouped into five broad categories:

1. **The General Situation** - sense of community and identity of the village.
2. **Character and Setting** - surrounds, the canal, waterside, footpaths etc.
3. **Building form and layout** - type and style of any new development.
4. **Industrial and Commercial** - views generally on existing and any new.
5. **Approaches and Surroundings** – approach road, parking, pedestrian access etc.

There was remarkable consensus in the replies to many of the questions, with a high percentage of agreement (85% plus) to many of the questions asked. In several cases there was 100% agreement (e.g. Q1 – 'It is very important that the village should retain a green area around it to keep it a separate entity' and Q8 'The sea wall and all village footpaths are important to the character of the village and should be preserved').

Each section has been analysed below and some provisional conclusions and recommendations made. They have been cross referenced with the comments received from the Village meeting held on in May 2006 when 'likes' and 'dislikes' were gathered.

1. The General Situation.

Analysis.
100% of the respondents to the Questionnaire felt that it was very important that the village should retain a green area around it to keep it a separate identity, with 95% agreeing with Maldon DC's policy of allowing development only within the village envelope. Community spirit in the village is strong (88%) but would suffer if there was substantial expansion.

Interpretation.
Clearly there is a very strong desire that the village should keep its own identity, be quite separate physically from Heybridge and not grow any further. The village would not wish to see any development in any of the surrounding farmland and open spaces. This physical 'separateness' contributes to the strong sense of community spirit. The villagers believe this would be eroded by any development in the surrounding green areas.

A number of comments were received about the wooded, green entrance to the village once leaving Goldhanger Road, which reinforced the feeling of arrival at a distinct, separate community.

2. Character and Setting.
Analysis
All respondents agreed that the sea wall and footpaths are important to the village and should be preserved. In the same vein, almost all (96%) agreed that the canal and waterside are fundamental to the character of the village. In particular 93% of the respondents agreed that any development must not detract from the canal area or affect its economic viability.

88% of the village agreed that the open nature of lawns and gardens within the existing housing plan should be kept and that unsympathetic infill development is not desirable (95%).

97%+ thought that the leisure activities associated with the canal and waterside areas should not be ignored when open or green spaces are made available and that existing drainage ditches and flood defences should be maintained in the design of any new development.

Interpretation
The villagers place a very high value on the canal and waterside areas of the village and great care must be given when considering any development that would impact on these areas. Including the sea wall and footpaths, these areas are considered by the residents to contribute very strongly to the 'essence and character' of the village.

This view is strongly endorsed by the residents' very positive comments about the lock side and surrounding historic buildings, considered to be the heart of the village and on which great value is placed.

The use of these areas for leisure purposes, such as walking, boating activities, and general amenity is highly valued by the village. This comes through very strongly in the numerous comments received. There is also recognition that allied commercial activities supporting the leisure and boating facilities are necessary in these areas but should be very carefully controlled to preserve the existing character and amenity value.

There is consensus that the gardens of the existing houses contribute to the openness of the village and loss of these open spaces through unsympathetic infilling has been detrimental to the character of the village. This view is endorsed by a number of specific comments received about more recent infill house building.

3. Building Form and Layout

Analysis

a) When further development in the village occurs, then: -

There was strong consensus (97%) that it should ensure that the general aspect of the village should be retained and that the footprint of any development is appropriate to the available site area (90%).

There was a marked preference towards small housing clusters of 2-5 houses (80%) rather than housing estate development.

b) Design and Construction

There was a strong preference (88%) that any new construction should be of the same style and materials as the surrounding buildings. There was however a majority view (63%) that new buildings should be individually designed as an 'architectural feature'.

Northern end of village showing open aspect of development

There was strong consensus (65%) that extensions should not significantly alter the nature of the original dwelling.
There was strong agreement that any new development should take into account flood risk (95%) but be limited to no more than two storeys (92%).

c) Types of building/dwellings.
There was complete unanimity that blocks of flats should not be built in the village and a strong preference against affordable (social) housing (66%) (See comments later in this document). Detached housing was the preferred type of housing (76%) followed by semi detached (71%), with only 50% of villagers wishing to see small terracing development. 67% of villagers thought that starter homes should be included.

Interpretation

It is clear that over development of plot size whether of an existing site or new build is not welcomed by the villagers – attempting to over develop a site is seen to have a

negative impact on the surrounding property and general aspect of the village. This echoes the earlier concern about infill development and creating over-bearing properties from smaller existing plots or gardens.

For any new build, there seems a preference for smaller development 'clusters', probably of larger detached housing, than estate type development although the inclusion of some smaller start up homes would not be discounted. There is a preference towards style and form that would be consistent with surrounding property. There is also a preference towards individual design in style and materials – good, imaginative design and architecture should not however make these two views mutually exclusive.

Any residential flat development would be contrary to the wishes of nearly all the villagers as would any development over 2 storeys high.

For existing buildings, there is a strong preference against extensions that alter the nature of the existing property.

4. Industrial and Commercial

Analysis
92% of the residents had a preference for retaining existing light industrial activity in the village. 67% felt the shops and associated activities serving the canal and waterside areas should be encouraged but only 29% felt that new commercial development in the village was acceptable. 77% thought that new development should not impact negatively on existing commercial activity.

Interpretation
There is general consensus that existing light industrial and commercial activity in the village should be encouraged and retained but any new commercial development would be unacceptable.

5. Approaches and surroundings

Analysis
There is a strong consensus (88%) in retaining the character of the existing approach road to the village and in particular that the roadside trees and hedges should be preserved (96%).

Improving pedestrian access to the village is strongly supported by residents (74%) as well as traffic calming measures in the village (73%). 70% of the villagers thought that a cycle path along the canal to Heybridge would be desirable.

The residents believe the style and intensity of the existing street lighting should be reflected in any new development (86%) and there is a very strong wish that utility services (wiring etc) should be buried wherever possible (88%).

There is a significant large majority of respondents, (87%) who believe that adequate off street parking should be provided in any new development.

82% of the villagers thought that the bus shelter was functional but could be improved architecturally.

Interpretation
The strong response to retention of the character of the approach road echoes earlier comments about the wooded entrance to the village being a desirable characteristic, and the desire to improve pedestrian access and have a cycleway along the canal is consistent with the importance placed by the residents on outdoor activity in the village. The traffic calming desire accords with this sentiment also.

The responses about car parking suggest there is a lack of off-street car parking for a significant minority of residents, possibly in the older part of the village, and almost certainly this is worsened by the parking restrictions on street parking and the volumes of visitors using the Daisy Meadow car park.

Current street lighting provision seems adequate but the wish to have utility wires and cables buried is a reflection of the importance placed by the residents on the character of the village and presumably a desire to avoid visual clutter.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines derive from the answers to the questionnaire and issues raised during the original workshop and subsequent public meetings as well an one-to-one and one-to-group feedback to the project team. They reflect the views of the majority of residents in Heybridge Basin and are a material consideration in relation to any new development, or redevelopment of existing buildings in the Basin.

Density
No development should be permitted where the density per hectare or portion of a hectare exceeds government guidelines.

Schemes for domestic development should incorporate smaller cottage style buildings similar to those in the lower part of Basin Road as well as larger detached “prestige” properties.

Valued views and site lines should be respected wherever possible and development layout should attempt to create interesting new vistas that will become equally valued over time.

Commercial and residential
Where appropriate mixed-use development should be permitted as defined in Maldon District Replacement Local Plan 2005.

Infill
Infilling large gardens with single properties and redevelopment of single storey dwellings into larger buildings should be closely controlled. In general designs of these new buildings should reflect the criteria that follow in this document.
Any new building must harmonise within the existing context where this is immediately adjacent. Design must be well executed with an eye to authenticity of scale, form, detailing and materials.

Layout of developments
No development scheme should detract from the character of the waterfront areas and footpaths that are key to the village's ethos.

Setting out of buildings must reflect the village's varied building line without being obviously arbitrary or unnecessarily random. While this would not preclude some building lines being close to roads or footpaths, the overall spacing of built elements should aim to achieve the same sense of openness and low profile found along Basin Road and on some of the newer estates.

Layouts should attempt to achieve connections with the existing village framework using footpaths, cycle paths and shared amenity spaces.
Shared open spaces for general public amenity should be encouraged in new housing layouts. Off-street parking should be hidden from general view through the use of rear parking courts.

Scale
The scale of any developments must respect the adjacent properties and reflect the overall designs found in the village.
Large massing should be avoided with large footprint areas broken down into smaller connected settlements wherever possible.
Three storey dwellings and 'sail-loft' like structures, although found in settlements further down river, are inappropriate in Heybridge Basin where no such buildings currently exist.

Design Style
Heybridge Basin does not have to exist in a time warp as far as building design is concerned. Contemporary design will be welcomed where it is well executed and incorporates aspects of design that reflect the diversity of form and style of the village as a whole.

Roofing materials
Plan forms should be such as to allow roofs to have minimal spans thus keeping overall ridge heights as low as possible and creating fewer box-like forms.
Dormer windows and in two-storey properties should be avoided as should roof lights in front elevations. Whilst these are not objectionable in themselves, they are not currently in evidence in Heybridge Basin.
Roofing materials should comprise an appropriate mix of natural slate, clay pantiles or peg tiles, in a red/orange mix. No dark brown, green or sand faced tiles should be used. Ridge tiles should be in clay terracotta ridge tiles, or blue/grey angled as an option on slated roofs.
Bargeboards must have good over-hang, generous depth and decorative mouldings, and not just plain strips of board.
Clipped or dry verges should have decorative dentil coursing beneath the cloaking tiles.
Eaves should have a good over-hang and incorporate detailing evident in older properties, such as “dog-tooth” dentil courses, or alternating projecting and recessing “snap headers”.

Rooflines on domestic dwellings can be enlivened by inclusion of chimneystacks of varying scale, height and detailing, and with a variety of pots in both red and buff terracotta such as are found in the conservation areas of the village.

External Walls
Should use an appropriate mix of render, without excessive patterned pargetting, Essex red/orange or red/multi brickwork with lime or lime-coloured flush pointed mortar, and traditional timber feather-edged weatherboarding painted white or stained black.
These finishes should be applied using reasoned design; i.e. whole dwellings that are either in brickwork or weather board are preferable to dwellings that try to have a little of
each.
Simple self-coloured white or off-white render is preferable to reds, greens and blues, although some colour, judiciously applied, can enliven a street scene.
Brickwork detailing such as plinth courses at the base of walls, dentil coursing below cills, eaves etc., curved and flat arches over windows are to be encouraged where appropriate to period styling.

External Works:
Should incorporate an appropriate mix of brickwork walls with traditional copings, vertical boarded fencing of natural colour, white picket fencing, willow hurdle fencing, metal railings of traditional design, and suitable planting. Hard areas should be in stone or good quality concrete flags, setts or cobbles, sealed shingle or gravel. Items to be avoided would include “crazy-paving”, concrete hard-standings to frontages, concrete bollards and overly pretentious gateways with concrete motifs.

Access and Roadways:
Access and Roadways should be designed to link newly developed areas to the rest of the village. They should be appropriate in scale; the narrow, shared pedestrian/vehicular roads of some estates are more successful than wider roads with raised footpaths to both

sides, and designed to encourage safe vehicular movement.
Blockwork in muted colours and sealed gravel is more attractive than tarmac.
Dedicated pedestrian footways should be surfaced in stone flags or good quality concrete
alternatives in preference to tarmac.
Road layouts should produce street scenes articulated by varied, though not arbitrary, building-lines and incorporate incidental planted areas with structural elements such as large trees.
Dedicated cycle paths that link up around the village and beyond should be a requirement of any new development.
Roadway lighting columns must be of a style and height appropriate to setting, as excessively tall, galvanised steel columns detract from the quality of the street scene.
The informality of the shared pedestrian and vehicular access from the Goldhanger Road end of Basin Road to the commencement of the towpath should be preserved in any new development and not overly “tidied up”.

General
Heybridge Basin is considered to be an isolated rural settlement without shops, job opportunities or a robust public transport system. As such it does not meet the criteria of affordable housing as set out in the Affordable Housing Exception Point policy.

Notwithstanding global warming and threats of flooding the village as a whole is strongly opposed to building three storey houses, the ground floor of which is merely a storage area. The rooflines of such developments are entirely out of character with the rest of the village as a whole and the conservation area in particular.

HEYBRIDGE BASIN VILLAGE BY AREA

[References are made to areas notated on the associated map; some areas overlap]

APPROACHES (Area B)

Heybridge Basin can be approached from either the Blackwater and Chelmer Canal towpath, which connects to Heybridge, the tidal Blackwater estuary or Basin Road connecting to the Goldhanger Road. The village proper starts directly after the entrance to Blackwater Sailing Club.

Mature oaks and hedgerows that clearly define the village limits from the surrounding farmland bound the approach road. This in turn, separates Heybridge Basin from the larger settlement of Heybridge.

Recommendations
Consideration should be given to making the mature oaks and hedgerows subject of tree preservation orders.

Future development should take place ***only*** within the existing village envelope

96% of respondents to the questionnaire felt that these trees and hedgerows should be preserved while a clear consensus (86%) thought that this character should be retained It is this clearly defined separation of identities that contributes much to the unique character of the village.

RIVERSIDE (Area C)

The banks of the River Blackwater provide endless opportunities for walkers, artists and birdwatchers who visit Heybridge Basin to enjoy the spectacular scenery across the water or mudflats according to tide. Much of the area is designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These banks have been reinforced and raised by the former National Rivers Authority- now the Environment Agency and are currently in a good state of repair. They, together with a system of drainage dykes, form part of the defence from tidal flooding. Closer to the Basin they support the shore facilities of boat repair yards, a thriving cafe and art shop and school.

Recommendations
The Environment Agency should be encouraged to continue maintaining the flood defence and dyke system that that constitutes the current flood protection system in the village.

The river path should be maintained but not paved to retain its semi-rustic style.

BASIN AND CANALSIDE – THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE (Area D)

The majority of Heybridge Basin consists of a number of modestly sized estates of recent vintage but the principal form is Basin Road, the canal and lock-side areas, and the arms of the sea wall footpaths stretching away in either direction along the coastline.

Residents place a very high value on the canal and waterside areas of the village and great care must be given when considering any development that would impact on these areas. Including the sea wall and footpaths, these areas contribute strongly to the 'essence and character' of the village.

This view is strongly endorsed by the residents' very positive comments about the Lock Hill and its surrounding historic buildings, considered to be the heart of the village. This is an area of small incremental developments where small well-proportioned buildings reflect the village's waterside history.

All respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the sea wall and footpaths are important to the village and should be preserved. In the same vein, almost all (96%) agreed that the canal and waterside are fundamental to village character. In particular 93% of the respondents agreed that any development must not detract from the canal area or affect its economic viability.

The use of these areas for leisure purposes, boating activities, and general amenity is highly valued. This comes through very strongly in the numerous comments received during the public workshops and subsequent meetings that led to the production of this Design Statement.

There is also recognition that allied commercial activities supporting the leisure and boating facilities are necessary in these areas but they should be carefully controlled to preserve the existing character and amenity value.

Recommendations

Any development proposals affecting the canal and waterside areas to be given particular and special attention re architectural quality, scale and overall contribution to the 'essence and character' of the area. The contribution to leisure activities, e.g. boating, walking and general amenity **must** be taken into account, (including allied commercial activity) in any development proposals for this area.

Any development of Lock Hill **must** reflect the design of existing listed buildings as far as possible, with weather- board finishes and pantile or similar roofing.

There is a preference for small developments of no more than **nine** new dwellings in the Lock Hill area.

Special construction methods **must** apply to any development involving canal banks; rights-of-way along the towpath must be retained and emergency vehicle access to the canal-side area be ensured.

Essex Waterways, which manages the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal, should be encouraged to consider a programme of investment in maintaining the basin wall and canal banks.

The existing Grade II listed dwellings on Lock Hill have been built on rafts of sleepers 'floating' on an unstable base of clay spoil from the excavation of the canal basin, and on a bed of gravel.
Sheet piling of the canal basin at present retains thousands of tonnes of water. Should it breach through excessive fluvial run-off during winter and spring, the risk of flooding from the canal will be significant. The subsequent damage to dwellings in the village Conservation Area would be enormous.

BASIN ROAD FROM THE VILLAGE SIGN TO THE BUS STOP (Area E)

The relative isolation of the village necessitates vehicular travel for most people and foot traffic along Basin Road is minimal.

Once into the developed part of the village the first section of Basin Road, as far as the bus stop, contains properties with generous landscaped frontages and a varying building line, which creates a sense of openness with plenty of attractive planting. This is emphasised by a broad, grassed verge on the left side of the road. The spacing between properties also contributes to a sense of the village having a low vertical profile. The more attractive dwellings are inevitably, of older vintage, a pleasant mixture of bungalows and two storey dwellings. Materials vary in quality, but there is plenty of variation.
There are some glaring exceptions and these include a pair of large, modern detached dwellings of unsympathetic design, and a similarly unsympathetic infill development where a new detached dwelling has been shoe-horned into a former garden, once home to a beautiful Magnolia tree.
The piecemeal erosion of these spaces as they are in-filled with houses that are out of scale and have little resonance with the vernacular building style is destroying this sense of openness, low profile and appropriate scale that is the hallmark of Heybridge Basin.
A similar detrimental effect is created when existing bungalows are replaced with two-storey dwellings that also generally occupy a larger area.
There are a number of seemingly inappropriate architectural design details to be found in this area on the village including first floor balconies in a pseudo-Mediterranean style, overly ornate pargetting, and large paved hard-standing areas in place of more conventional gardens.
The breeze-block bus shelter itself is the cause of much concern as it is used by local youths as a goal even when there is a football area on the adjacent St George's field. It also attracts the unwelcome attention of graffiti 'artists'.

Recommendations

New buildings that are in effect infilling should be designed to complement other dwellings in the immediate vicinity.

Where possible mature trees should not be felled to make way for new buildings.

Infill dwellings should be designed with either stand alone or integral garages as a matter of course.

Consideration should be given to replacing the existing bus shelter with some other material more suited to the area such as timber.

BASIN ROAD TO FOOT OF LOCK HILL (Area F)

Basin Road continues into the older part of the village and the Conservation Area itself. In this stretch of road there is generally less green, open space between the dwellings, but there is both scale and design. This part of the village contains a mixture of older buildings including the Old Butcher's Shop and the Barn which names indicate their previous use before conversion into dwelling houses. These older houses are mainly cottage style and terraced, with either natural brick finish or lime washed walls adding visual interest to this stretch of road. Interspersed with them are some newer dwellings that have been designed to complement the form of the older buildings whilst still retaining the two-storey structure that is common throughout the village.

Recommendations

As the area is designated a conservation zone there are already strictures as to what may or may not be built.

Any development suggestions that include knocking down any of the existing cottages should be resisted,

Where windows or doors are replaced with double glazed units these should, as far as possible, reflect the original design of the dwellings.

Any plans to extend these dwellings upwards should be resisted as this would adversely impact the area.

CHAPEL LANE AND THE REAR OF LOCK HILL (Area G)

Chapel Lane, the former United Reformed Church chapel and the rear of Lock Hill present an interesting mix of old and new. The former telephone exchange sits four square on the corner of Chapel Lane and Basin Road whilst the former URC church, a weather boarded structure is on the opposite side.
Between the two buildings Chapel Lane soon narrows to a footpath giving access to a small number of cottage style properties with secluded but quite large gardens. This narrow access with no access for emergency vehicles is a matter of great concern to the residents. From Chapel Lane a further narrow path gives foot access to the rear of Lock Hill, which has a number dwellings probably originally built for staff who worked on the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal. Some have plain brick finishes whilst another is a prime example of an Essex weatherboard building. All the houses in this specific area have mature gardens and are well shaded by trees.

Recommendations

The URC Chapel, originally a gift from the Sadd family to the village should be preserved and application for listed status be made.

As the building was originally a gift to the village, consideration should be given to its use for community purposes.

Every effort should be made to conserve this area in its present state for the benefit of future generations of villagers and visitors to Heybridge Basin.

Vehicular access to those parts of Chapel Lane presently ‘cut-off’ should be part of any development proposal for the area.

HARFRED AVENUE (Area H)

Recommendations

Individual infill development using existing gardens in Harfred Avenue should be discouraged.

Existing bungalows should be retained in their present form.

Consideration should be given to the application of a Tree Preservation Order in respect of the signal fir at the junction with Basin Road

The individual properties of Harfred Avenue represent, on the whole, modern, pattern-book designs, which do not necessarily reflect the best of the village's vernacular style. However, the Avenue's best attributes are its considerable width and the generous plot frontages. Along with the informal road surfacing, it presents a wide and airy prospect from the Basin Road junction, and the terminal view out across the fields of the Blackwater Sailing Club allows the eye to continue beyond the avenue's architecture.
A signal fir tree with sweeping boughs marks the junction with Basin Road.

THE STILES (Area J)

Recommendations

Replacement windows and doors should reflect the original timber finish in colouring and style.

The construction of loft rooms with projecting dormer windows should be resisted, as they are untypical in the village as a whole.

Dwellings in The Stiles are accessed via a pleasant, grass-verged approach road and are of a curious 80's architectural pattern-book style "with-a-twist".
The generous garden frontages, now quite well matured and with some signal trees, echo the softened edges of Basin Road.
Taking into account the very narrow shared pedestrian and vehicular roadway that winds gently between the housing the overall effect is pleasing. In general terms, although the layout is an early example of the rather over-played "random" scattering, the plot layouts and landscaping of The Stiles score quite highly. The inclusion of chimneys articulate the fairly narrow spanning and therefore low-profile roofs, and there is some variation in external materials and finishes.
The original design uses stained timber frame fenestration that is slowly being replaced by modern materials.

THE COLLIERS (Area K)

Recommendations

The open land between The Colliers and St George's Church should remain as an undeveloped open space to prevent an impression of overcrowding through additional building.

The main access road into The Colliers winds in a predictable fashion that seems to remain the standard approach to "village" estate layout.

The houses themselves attempt to capture a sense of the semi-rural in their mixture of brickwork and render but there seems a less generous allowance of frontage space here than elsewhere, and consequently the houses dominate the streetscape.

ST. GEORGE'S CLOSE AND ST GEORGE'S FIELD (Areas A and L).

Recommendations

The open aspect of St. George's Field must be retained without further urbanisation of what was once a salt marsh meadow through provision of more play equipment.

Consideration should be given to the provision of sloping access to the river path at The Colliers side of the field so that those with disabilities and families with pushchairs or prams can more easily access the riverbank.

The question of spacing between individual houses is to the fore in St. George's Close, as frontages have the bare minimum of garden. Most houses have little more than a planted strip between the front door and the road edge. As a result the street has a claustrophobic feel about it, and the scale of the houses themselves exacerbates this. Nevertheless many of the houses in this development benefit from views across the public open space that is St George's Field across to the Blackwater Estuary.

As with every other estate development in the village, St. George's Close could be anywhere in the country in terms of design, and has no stylistic connection with the Basin whatsoever. Nonetheless, the best has been made of the positive aspects such as the varied palette of materials; the off-street parking that is tucked under over-sailing first floors and chimneystacks to enliven the roof-scape.

BLACKWATER CLOSE AND BURRSWOOD (Area M)

Recommendations

Development of adjacent areas must take note of restricted access through Blackwater Close and into the Burrswood area.

Here we see "random" layout of housing expounded by the "*Essex Design Guide*", and a style that developers often consider to be "rustic". However, the palette of materials is one of the better-observed ones, and the narrow roads along with reasonably generous planted spaces between dwellings tailor the development to its surroundings. As with the other village estates there has been no attempt properly to connect the area to the rest of the village although with such piecemeal development of isolated parcels of land this is perhaps inevitable.

MARITIME WAY AND SPINNAKER DRIVE
(Area N)

Much of what has been said relating to the other estates applies also to Maritime Way and to Spinnaker Drive. The roadway devolves down to a narrower width, but the wide junction with Basin Road lacks the necessary intimate scale. Those properties backing on to the riverbank benefit from generous open space between the buildings, which provide pleasant grassed areas some of which have been planted by residents.
Some of the buildings have conservatories at first floor level that are out of place with the development.

Recommendations
Erection of large conservatory structures at either ground or first floor level should be subject to obtaining planning consent.

CONCLUSION

The VDS is the distillation of what residents feel makes Heybridge Basin special, what they want to see preserved and equally important what they would like planners, designers, developers and others to take into account when proposing new development.

These are some of the views of residents expressed at the workshop, which preceded the production of the VDS:

"Essential character is based on the existence of the canal, canal basin and sea lock."

"*Chapel Lane church. Super village building should be preserved and turned into a community hall."*

"**Higgledy Piggledy buildings with some unusual designs and the character of old buildings"**

This document is a faithful record of the views of the residents of Heybridge Basin as expressed in open meetings and through their answers to the questionnaire. It is the product of wide and continuing consultation.

The introduction states that this statement is about managing change in the village and not preventing it. Naturally Heybridge Basin will continue to develop. Nevertheless it is expected that the Heybridge Basin Village Design Statement will help those involved with development within the village to ensure that any new development is designed and located to show respect for locally held values and to meet local needs.

Acknowledgements

Heybridge Basin Village Design Statement (VDS) could not have been achieved without the dedicated work of a number of people and without the help and support of Chris Bailey, Senior Planning Officer Maldon District Council; Stella Meesters, Essex Rural Community Council; our ward councillor, Cllr Bryan Harker and our Parish councillor, Cllr Prof Lewis Schnurr.

The project team spent many hours designing the questionnaire, interpreting the results and writing this report.
The team included:
Questionnaire development
Mary Wild, Colin Edmond, Jo and Alistair Cameron and John Fuller;
Graham Howat, questionnaire analysis and report writing;
Mark Crocker, architectural assessment and design section authorship
'Mac' McPherson – foreword;
Denys Harrison- a brief history of the Basin
Photography:- Roger Slade, John Fuller, Mark Crocker
Our faithful band of leaflet deliverers including Jane Withall, Gladys Coulson, Lin Moore, Sue Howat, Doug Milsted and the Camerons
Report design and artwork: Colin Finch

VDS Co-ordinator: Ian Hawkins