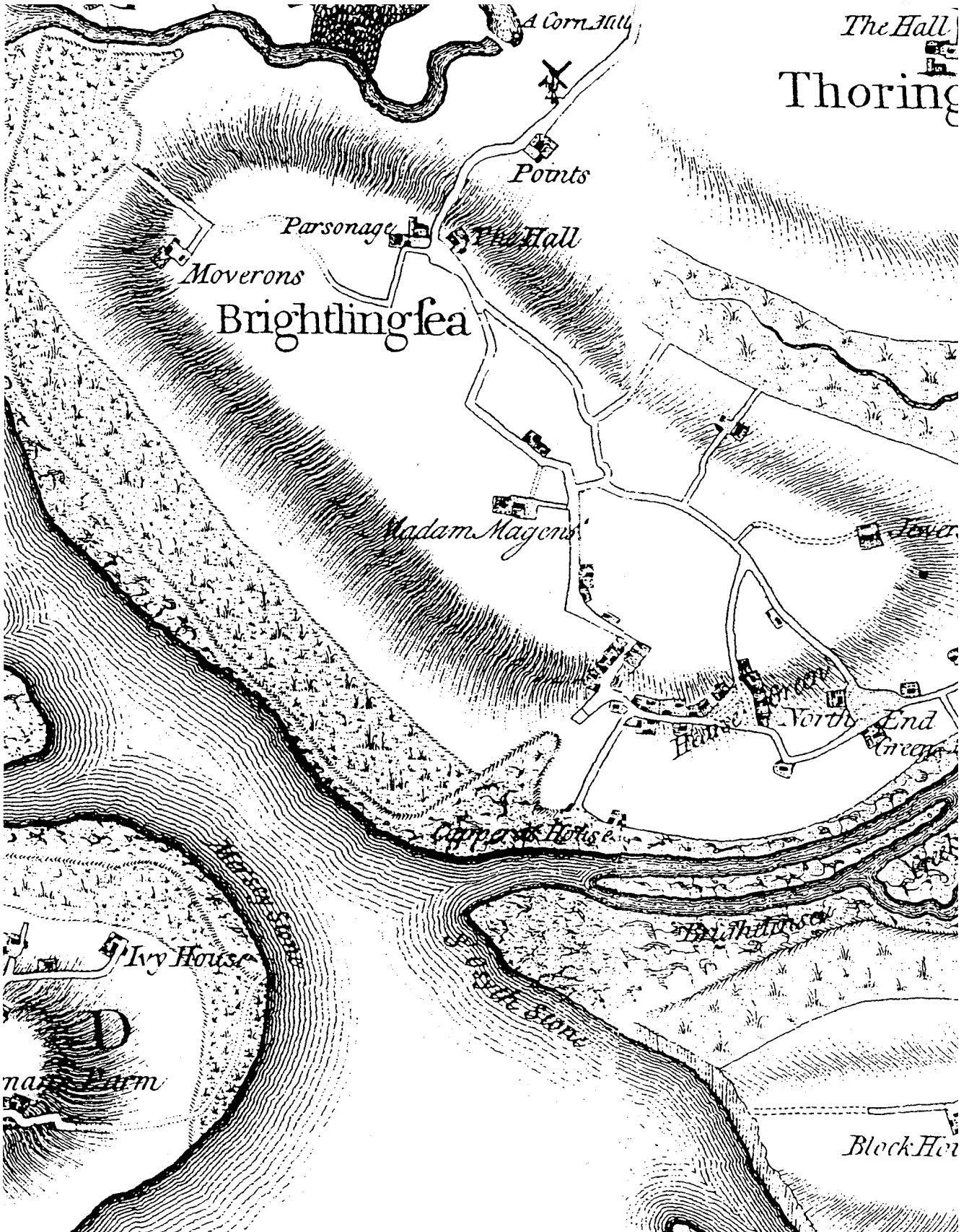




Brightlingsea Hall & All Saints Church Conservation Area

The Hall
Thoring



DISCLAIMER

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal adopted by the Council in March 2006 and appearing on this WebPage is derived from an earlier document produced for the Council by consultants Smith Stuart Reynolds in 2001. Subsequently, the Council published these documents for consultation purposes in late 2005. These were then partially updated and amended to reflect the comments received from town and parish councils and other interested parties. No comprehensive revision and updating of the 2001 documents took place.

The Council recognises that over time changes have taken place to various buildings referred to in the Appraisals so that certain comments / statements made in relation to those buildings are now, no longer applicable. For up to date information relating to planning applications, permissions or other developments on individual buildings referred to in the Appraisals you are advised to use the Council's planning public access search engine at www.tendringdc.gov.uk/TendringDC/Environment/Planning+and+Buildings/ or contact Regeneration, Planning and Community Services on 01255 686161.

Brightlingsea Hall & All Saints Church Conservation Area

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been produced by the District Council but is based on earlier work by consultants Smith Stuart Reynolds in 2001. These earlier documents contain the views of the consultant and did not necessarily reflect the Council's Officer's views. Although these documents have existed for some time they had no formal, planning status.

The Council subsequently agreed in 2005 to prepare Conservation Area Character Appraisals for each of its Conservation Areas and as a forerunner to updating the above consultant's documents a consultation exercise took place in late 2005 / early 2006. This involved town and parish councils and certain local amenity bodies. The results of the consultation exercise were reported to the Council's Planning Portfolio Holder when the document was formally considered for adoption as Council planning policy. As a result of this consultation the Appraisal documents have been amended and updated in the light of the comments received from consultees and as a result of certain changes which have taken place since 2001. Much of the descriptive material used in the original SSR documents has been retained.

Proposals originally put forward by the Consultant involving suggested changes to Conservation Area boundaries, enhancement works or proposed Article 4 Directions have been retained in these latest documents. However, it is recognised that town or parish councils do not support some of these suggestions and this is referred to in the appropriate document. Their inclusion in the documents as suggestions only does not indicate that the District Council supports such proposals at this time. They will be subject to further consideration by the Council in due course. Indeed all such proposals for boundary changes, and any new Article 4 Directions will be required to go through quite separate, statutory processes which will also be carried out with further public consultation.

This document has been formally adopted by the Council as part of its planning policies for this conservation area under the provisions of Section 71 of the Planning [Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas] Act 1990. It will therefore be an important material consideration in relation to the assessment and determination of planning and related applications in the Conservation Area.

SUMMARY

The Area includes the town church and its hall in their detached position commanding the main entrance to the Brightlingsea peninsular. The Hall is a plain 19th century building with a range of outbuildings of various dates and styles mostly in light industrial use.

Brightlingsea Hall & All Saints Church Conservation Area

LOCATION

The Conservation Area includes All Saints Church, Brightlingsea Hall and the outbuildings to the Hall, all standing on the edge of a ridge of high ground above the Alresford creek. The modern edge of Brightlingsea town is visible across level fields to the south east. The Conservation Area is bisected by the B1029, the only main road accessing Brightlingsea.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The Brightlingsea promontory framed by salt marshes, the river and its creeks was settled from an early date. Indeed, the parish was an island until the later 16th century. Brightlingsea was a Royal *vill* in late Saxon times, the church appearing to date from this time or the early Norman period. It stands on the site of a substantial Roman building and is set within an extensive ancient landscape including a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and a Roman field system.

Medieval Brightlingsea is a typical Essex polyfocal settlement, with the church and hall providing one focus overlooking Arlesford Creek, further foci at Hearse Green and North End Green, and a number of isolated large farmsteads, connected by a network of lanes. The roadway widened at the church to incorporate a pound opposite the hall. This small green may be the focus of the earliest medieval or late Saxon settlement of the former island.

The scale and character of the church is a reflection of the relative prosperity of the town. Trade from Brightlingsea was carried on during the medieval period in oysters, fish, copperas (green pigment from naturally-occurring bisulphide of iron) salt and bricks from the brickfields between Brightlingsea and St Osyth. Roman cement created from local septaria (metamorphosed clay nodules) was also traded following its discovery and patenting in 1796. Brightlingsea is still a non-corporate member of Sandwich, the Cinque Port, and the only Cinque Port member outside Sussex and Kent.

Chapman and André's Essex Map of 1777 graphically shows the position of the church and hall at the summit of the ridge. A parsonage is indicated to the south of the church, but no trace now remains.

The advent of the railways altered trade patterns and introduced tourism to the town. Brightlingsea obtained a branch line from Wivenhoe in 1866, which carried oysters, fish and trippers, and enabled massive numbers of sprats to be exported by train ferry from Harwich to Eastern Europe. The line was always susceptible to flooding, and three miles were lost in the storm of January 1953. The branch closed in 1964.

Although the town has developed over the last hundred and fifty years towards the church, it still retains its isolated position at the north western extremity of the peninsular. As the main road serving the town, the B1029 will have witnessed considerable increases in traffic levels which have a relatively severe impact on this small Area.

All Saints Church is a fine structure with early Norman origins and a 13th century chancel though the overriding impression is of the Perpendicular style used for the west tower of 1490 and the remodelling of the nave, aisles and porches through to the second quarter of the 16th century. The clerestory fell in 1814 and was not rebuilt.

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The Area consists of the Church and its churchyard, the Hall and outbuildings to the north, the barns to the east and an associated field to the north sloping down to the creek, and Church Road as it approaches from the north in a defile and widens with substantial verges in front of the Hall.

REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN POLICY CONTEXT

The Conservation Area lies outside the town's Development Boundary, and is encompassed within the Coastal Protection Belt.

AREA APPRAISAL

The Churchyard is fronted by a low brick wall, older and with half round coping to the north, more modern and with copings of red engineering brick to the south. The lych-gate dates from around the end of the First World War and is a traditional open structure in black stained timber.

All Saints Church itself is a memorable Church of typical East Anglian pattern, listed Grade I. As with the best examples of this style, the relative length of the nave and chancel contrast with the tremendous height and massiveness of the flint tower, an important feature in the local landscape and particularly visible from the River Colne. From the ground directly outside the south porch and at the foot of the west tower, there is an attractive glimpse of open countryside. Elsewhere the well-treed cemetery prevents wider views. The churchyard is bounded on its south side by an attractive hedge to the lane.

Outside the churchyard there is a small triangular green, its floral display linking with the Brightlingsea name board on a small grassed area on the other side of the road.

Brightlingsea Hall sits behind a low buttressed brick wall which mirrors the more substantial of the walls fronting the churchyard. It is a plain Victorian building of two storeys, with red brick elevations under a clay tiled roof. The sash windows are in arched openings with straight-sided heads. To the rear is a simply-detailed single storey modern property with rendered walls under a concrete tiled roof. The square forecourt in front of the Hall shows traces of Victorian planting, particularly in the remains of the circular bed in the centre of the drive, and in the notable conifer by the current vehicular entrance.

The outbuildings are now the premises of Graham Labelling Systems. The most prominent buildings are a fine weatherboarded barn with a red pantiled roof on the road frontage, and a similarly-scaled though heavily-altered former agricultural building to the rear of the premises, now of two storeys with modern windows.

The remaining buildings occupied by Graham Labelling are single storey, of varying construction and facing materials, and of very limited visual value. To the rear, the ground drops relatively sharply into the yards and car park attached to the works.

APPRAISAL PLAN

The above analysis has been used to generate Maps 1 indicating the essential structure of the Conservation Area and its relative quality. Included are features regarded as either negative or neutral compared to the character and appearance of the Area, as follows.

Negative factors

No negative factors have been identified in this small Area.

Neutral factors

The more rough-and-ready buildings occupied by Graham Labelling can be regarded as neutral factors, along with the yard areas serving them. They do not have a more serious impact on the Area because they are generally well-screened by the more substantial and older structures associated with the works, and because the remaining buildings do not create a strong character with which they might be at variance.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: BUILDINGS

Graham Labelling

This firm occupies a variety of buildings to the east of the Hall. In absolute terms, the ability of the current or any future occupier of the site to be able to invest more in buildings and their setting would be a visual enhancement of the Area. Such an investment would include the improvement of the larger, more significant structures, the replacement of the more temporary buildings, and the reconsideration of intervening spaces.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: CURTILAGES

The Hall

The Hall is a plain building and as such is relatively dependent on the quality of its setting. It is clear from the surviving indications of drives and garden walls that this was originally of some scale and interest, though little maintenance appears to have been carried out for some considerable time. It is to be hoped that sufficient investment can be generated to provide the Hall with amore worthy setting.

Graham Labelling

The courtyard spaces associated with the works are surfaced and patched in a variety of materials. The comments made above about the works buildings are equally relevant to the condition and appearance of the yards and other intervening spaces.

SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

While the forecourt to the Graham Labelling works is laid with tarmac, the actual road edge of both wings of the access road is only roughly surfaced and could be upgraded. This would improve the general appearance of Church Road and its verges which are an important entrance feature for the town as a whole.

Similarly, the triangular junction in front of the churchyard lych gate has relatively large expanses of tarmac and the churchyard frontage itself is rather haphazardly surfaced. This may have been due in part to the building works being carried on at the church at the time of survey, but is worth noting for remedial work in the future.

BOUNDARY REVIEW

As the Area already includes all properties of any significance in this isolated location, no extensions to the Area are suggested.

The long history of settlement in this location is of considerable historic interest but with little visual evidence to begin to translate into “character” or “appearance”. While the church is an extremely noble building, of undoubted historic and architectural importance and a significant landmark, the remaining buildings in the Area are of much less significance, and do not appear to have achieved any stability in terms of use, appearance or condition.





1. Church Road, All Saints Church and the road junction from the south east. The visual significance of the main road is clearly apparent in this view, as is the important mature planting to the frontage of the Hall on the right of the photograph.



2. This view taken next to the west tower of the church is one of a sequence overlooking the Creek from this part of the churchyard. The extensive churchyard has many mature trees, and gains interest from the combination of formal and informal maintenance.



3. The front elevation to the Hall shows its simple detailing and the vestiges of its former designed setting.



4. The Hall from the churchyard frontage to the west. The front boundary wall, incidental walling within its curtilage and the mature trees are all significant features which would be enhanced by greater maintenance.



5. Church Road from the Lych gate, looking towards the town. Once again the road is dominant, reinforced by the relative amenity associated with the road junction.



6. The entrance to the yard occupied by the buildings. Labelling. On the right and in the distance are the most significant structures on the site; their presence has historic significance and help to enclose the area. Investment in these buildings and their surroundings would be an enhancement of the Area as a whole.

Further Information

For further information about the Conservation Area Reviews please contact Tendring District Council's Heritage and Conservation Manager on 01255 686170.