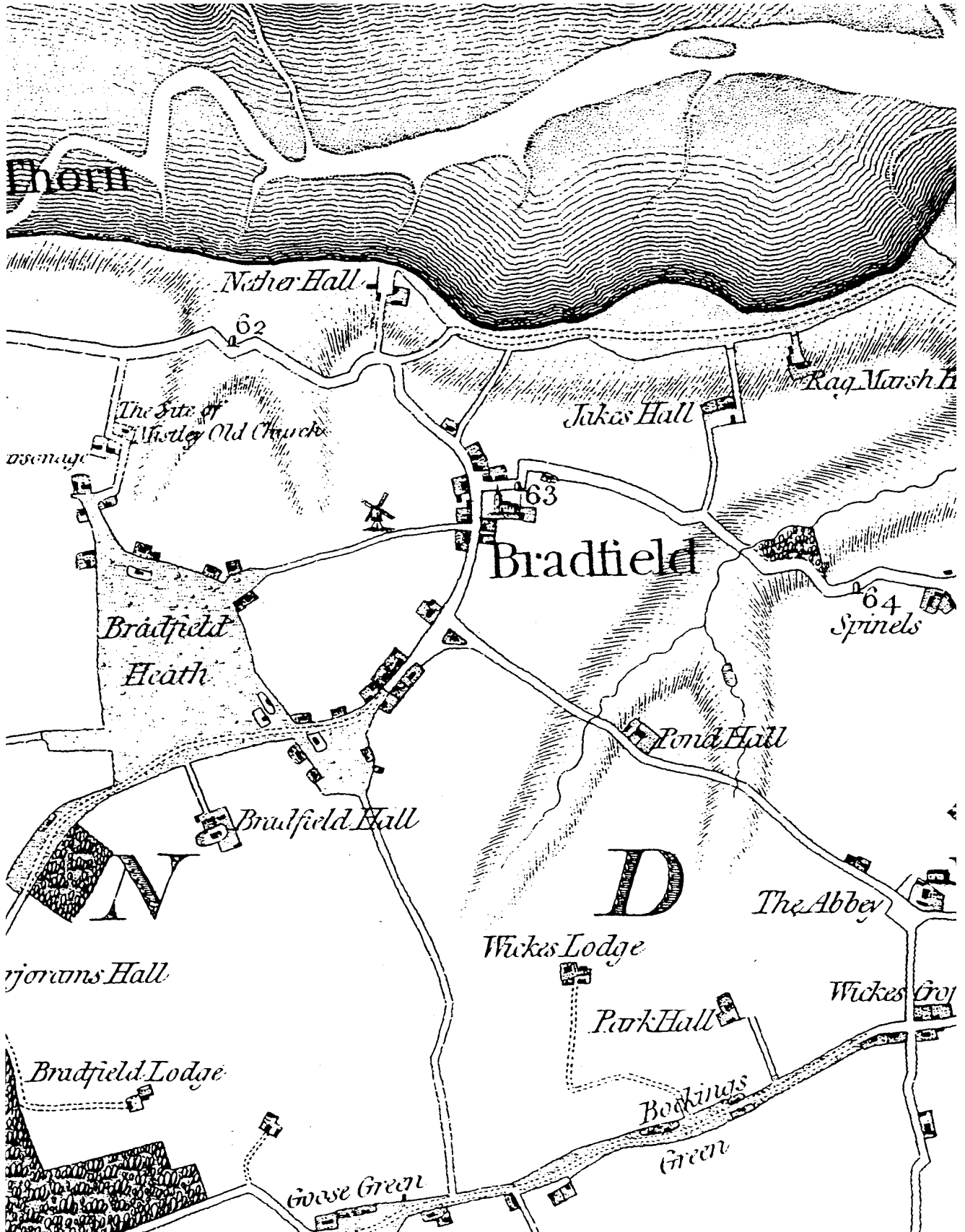




Bradfield Conservation Area



Bradfield 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

Bradfield Conservation Area acknowledges the historic and architectural importance of the little group of buildings historically associated with the parish church of this dispersed settlement. As well as the church, the churchyard and the former vicarage, the character of the Area derives mainly from its vernacular cottages fronting the main roads, most particularly the individual cottages with prominent facades and gables on The Street.

Bradfield Conservation Area

LOCATION

Bradfield Conservation Area occupies the north-eastern end of a complex and substantial linear settlement comprising Bradfield and Bradfield Heath. While most of the settlement stands in level open countryside, the Area which surrounds the Parish Church of St. Lawrence is close to the gentle slopes that lead down to the Stour Estuary. Though the B1352 Harwich Road, which enters the Area from the east, gives splendid views of the estuary along its length, the Area itself stands back from the river on a slight spur and is further detached by the presence of mature planting on the north east side of the main road.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Bradfield was noted in the Domesday Book, the "broad field" being reflected in the dispersed character of the settlement of which the cluster of houses round what is now the Church of St Lawrence is only a small part.

The contrast is still clear on Chapman and André's Essex map of 1777. The map shows what is now the Conservation Area almost completely developed, with other groups of houses on the main road leading to the open area of Bradfield Heath occupying the space between the two roads running north from Bradfield Hall to Mistley Old Church.

The Church of St Lawrence dates from the 13th century, with 19th century transepts. Chapman and André indicate a spire, which was noted in the same year by Morrand as "ruinous and partly down". The church was restored in 1840, when a school room may have been constructed close to where the Edwardian lych gate stands today.

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The area is drawn to include Bradfield Place (the former vicarage) and its walled garden to the east and south of the church. The boundary runs westward to The Street, and then southwards to include Pilgrims Place before turning north along the backs of frontage properties before turning eastwards across Station Road to include the cottages on the north east corner of the junction with Harwich Road.

REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN POLICY CONTEXT

The Area boundary extends eastwards beyond the Development Boundary to incorporate Myrtle Cottage and Bradfield Place. Safeguarded Open Space is identified at the central "T" Junction in the village and it extends in a south east direction, encompassing the Church of St. Lawrence, and develops beyond the Development Boundary and the Conservation Area. The Coastal Protection Belt dominates the land on the northern tip of the settlement. The southern perimeter of the area is defined by the proposed Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB boundary which also includes Bradfield Place and adjoining Church.

AREA APPRAISAL

The plan of the Area is essentially a "T" junction, where the minor road from Bradfield Heath joins the main road between Harwich and Mistley. The junction is dominated by the Church of St. Lawrence, striking in its simplicity, the cruciform body of the Church finished in whitewashed render contrasting strongly with the massive west tower. The broad buttresses flush with the west face of the tower, and its severe top storey in red brick with a plain parapet, add to the distinctiveness of this unusual structure. The churchyard is a pleasant area with an attractive degree of informality. A short, relatively open frontage to The Street, with the main entrance framed by a traditional timber lych-gate contrasts with the tall brick boundary walls on the south side of the churchyard and the low retaining brick walls to the road frontages to the north and west. The crinkle-crankle wall to the grounds of Bradfield Place is sadly in a poor state of repair. The buttresses applied to this normally self-buttressing form of structure show that its structural problems are long term and chronic. The other disappointment is the rear boundary of Squire's Cottage, which, being constructed of lap fencing, is insufficiently substantial in this context.

Bradfield Place itself is a plain, two storey late Georgian house with small pane and Victorian sash windows and an elegant cast iron verandah to the east. Its grounds are mainly laid to lawn with several fine mature trees. The densely planted frontage helps to define the approach from Harwich, along with a row of prettily-painted council houses, the gaps between which afford the only real glimpses of the estuary from the village. Opposite the Church stands a single storey weatherboarded Hall, fenced off and in obviously poor structural condition. The restoration of this building or its replacement with a suitable new structure would be an obvious enhancement to the village. The mature trees at the western end of its frontage form an attractive entrance feature with the trees of the churchyard.

On the north side of Harwich Road, at the "T" junction, stands Milestones, a pretty one-and-a-half storey cottage with rendered walls below a roof of old clay tiles pierced by traditional dormers. This cottage is also important in views from the south. The enclosure of the north-eastern quadrant of the junction is consolidated by Acacia House, a pretty two storey building of colour washed brick and render, with an attractive old shop front in its prominent side gable. Between them stands a listed cast iron mile-post, typical of the area.

A low brick wall with a laurel hedge forms the effective entrance to the village from the north, along with Beer House Cottage, a modern design of vernacular styling behind a low picket fence. This broadens out into a significant space centred on the crossroads, and framed by the Church, the cottages in the north-eastern quadrant, the Strangers Home public house, Squire's Cottage and Barley Cottage.

Strangers Home itself is prominent in views from the Harwich Road, and its extensive front curtilage is an important feature in the approach from the north. It is a late Victorian building with half-timbered facings over a substantial brick ground floor. With its surviving coach house to the south, it represents the imposition of a Home Counties neo-vernacular in this small village. The modern projecting central porch would have been more attractively finished with plain clay tiles, while the open pub forecourt with its variety of boundary materials is a jarring feature in the street scene.

The Street runs south from the "T" junction and connects this part of the village to Bradfield Heath. Its principal features are a group of small detached or paired cottages rising from the back edge of the highway, with their roof ridges parallel to the road. The finest and most significant sequence is on the east side of the road, where the prominent gables of three such groups hold the outside of the slight curve and contrast with the equally important spaces between them. From the north end the first of these is Squire's Cottage; this is of two-and-a-half storeys, with weatherboarded upper façade and side gables under a roof of old clay tiles. Beyond the churchyard frontage with the lych-gate are Elderberry Cottage and No. 2, a pair of two storey cottages in red brick with mainly small-pane sash windows in openings with segmental brick arches. A large informal vehicular run-in to the south of No. 2 throws its flat roofed rear extension into greater prominence. The wattled side and rear fencing of this property is not substantial enough in this context though a small garden tree is an important feature. The final pair, No. 7 and Myrtle Cottage, are smooth rendered and colour washed with unfortunate replacement windows. To the rear, an attractive development by the Rural Housing Trust makes a pleasant grouping with another part of the crinkle-crankle wall to Bradfield Place, happily in better condition in this location. The road frontage to Rectory Gardens is however rather bland and its chain link fencing very much the worse for wear. If fencing is required, it should be replaced with something more attractive and substantial: otherwise, additional planting in native species would be an enhancement.

Opposite these cottages, development on the west side of The Street is more varied. It begins at the north end with Barley Cottage, a much altered traditional building filling an important function in facing the large space created by the junction and the pub forecourt. A heavily-pruned horse-chestnut in its front garden is a significant feature, though it can never achieve anything like its full size because of the existence of overhead telephone cables. These are quite significant in The Street as a whole, and under-grounding might be considered as an enhancement.

Next comes a group of four houses, of two storeys but with radically different styles and finishes. The first three share a plain clay tiled roof and dentilled eaves, though original window patterns only appear to survive in the central property with its brick arch. At the southern end of the group is the Laurels, a spreading design of two storeys, with sash windows in a façade of warm red Flemish bond brickwork. The pretty central door and door case are no doubt due to a local craftsman.

To the south is Stour Reach, a rather nautical-looking new house with a prominent gable faced in white weatherboarding with decorative barge-boards. The adjacent house, Hallam Cottage, is a traditional one-and-a-half storey building with a gambrel roof in old clay tiles and dentilled brick eaves. Its re-working with segmentally headed dormers and bay windows is perhaps a little fussy, while the flat roofed garage to one side is unfortunate. Beyond is the only cottage on the west side to match the distinctive character of those on the other side of the road. This is Lynden House, of two storeys with a gambrel roof and dentilled brick eaves. It is attractively colour-washed and forms a significant feature of The Street as it rises from the back of the footpath at a slight bend in the road.

The Conservation Area continues past two undistinguished post-war semis with open and poorly maintained forecourts, to the corner of Mill Lane. This is marred by a modern house which pays no regard to its historic setting, and the only elements of significance are the maturing trees on the corner. Mill Lane itself is relatively straight, and is characterised by housing developments of various dates on the north side, including two groups of four Victorian terraced houses, and mature hedgerow on the south side. There is no special architectural or historic interest.

On the south side of the Mill Lane junction stand Weaver's Cottage and Freech Cottage. These are a reticent pair of cottages, with facades with modern replacement windows peeping out behind virginia creeper. Both front gardens are heavily planted behind stained picket fencing. The final house in the Area is Pilgrims Place. This has a name and date stone on the front elevation and is dated 1831. It is a much-altered two storey building of brick under a pantiled roof. Originally three cottages, there is now a single front porch to one side and replacement windows in PVC. To the side is a small herbal enterprise named "Flowery Mead", the street frontage of which is in chain link fencing and could be improved.

Opposite is the large open space playing fields and Community Centre run by Bradfield Parish Council. There is an interesting view to the side and rear of Bradfield Place, with its setting of mature trees. There are no significant views out over surrounding countryside. Further development outside the Area is confined to the west side of The Street, and consists of post-war houses and bungalows before another small group of traditional buildings is reached. These have considerable visual appeal, but are too far divorced from the existing Area to be considered for inclusion.

APPRAISAL PLAN

The above analysis has been used to generate Maps 1 and 2, indicating the essential structure of the Conservation Area and its relative quality. Included in Map 2 are features regarded as either negative or neutral compared to the character and appearance of the Area, as follows.

Negative factors

The Street/Mill Lane

The post-war houses on the corner of Mill Lane and running north along The Street make no concessions to their historic setting. This is particularly unfortunate given the subtle character of the Area, defined by the aggregation of many small elements.

Neutral factors

The Street

Weaver's Cottage and Freech Cottage are of some historic interest, but they do not relate positively to the road frontage as do the most important of the Area's frontages.

The Strangers Home, though a long-established part of the village scene, does not relate to the plan form or established character of the Area. Beer House Cottage immediately to the north shares the same fault in that it is placed in the centre of its plot and does not enclose the road junction as do the vernacular cottages across the road.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: CURTILAGES

Bradfield Place

The restoration of the crinkle-crankle wall would be an obvious enhancement for the churchyard as well as the house.

Squire's Cottage

The eventual replacement of the rear boundary wall with masonry, ideally of suitable brick, would enhance this prominent feature within the churchyard.

Strangers Home

This is a prominent building with a frontage which is important to the character and appearance of the Area. Hard and soft landscaping within the pub forecourt could be improved, as could the treatment of the front boundary to provide greater enclosure and in a more consistent manner.

SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The undergrounding of overhead wires within the limited extent of the Area would be a notable improvement.

BOUNDARY REVIEW

The potential for the substantial expansion of the Area has been explored in the Appraisal text with the conclusion that no potential exists. On the other hand, the precise boundary on either side of Station Road has been overtaken by development proposals, and the boundary needs amendment to reflect this.

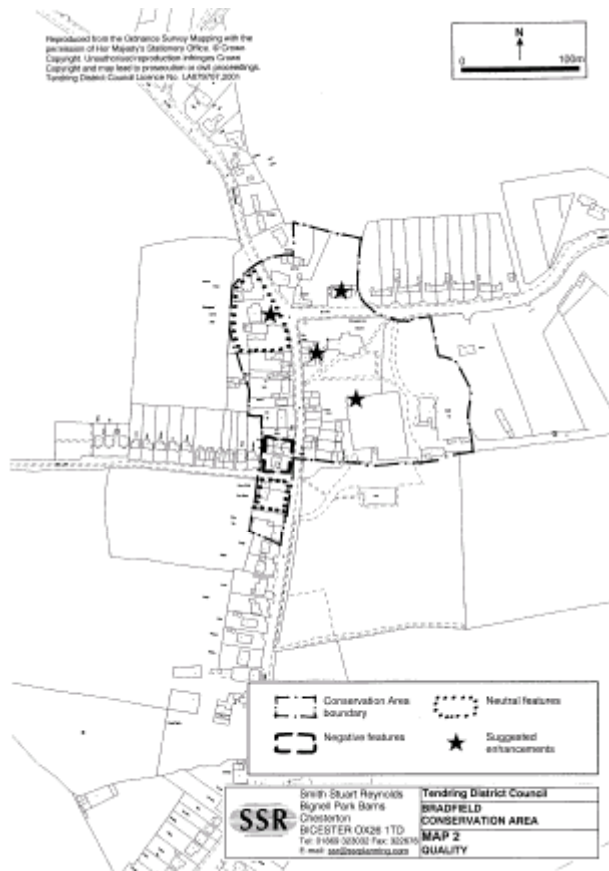
Given the visual importance though neutral character of Beer House Cottage north of the Strangers Home, and its position at the edge of the village at this point, it is recommended that the Area boundary is enlarged to include its curtilage. A consistent approach would lead to the inclusion of the whole of the grounds of the modern house opposite.

At the other end of the Area, a southwards extension includes Weaver's Cottage, Freech Cottage and Pilgrim's Place. With the extensive playing fields opposite, the setting for these houses is very different to that for most other properties in the Area. As the inclusion of these cottages has resulted in the inclusion of the unsympathetic post war houses north of Mill Lane, the benefits of this southwards extension are questionable.

Both areas under review are shown on Map 3.

Further Information

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







1. The Street looking northwards. This view encapsulates the essence of the Area, with individual or paired cottages positioned close to the carriageway with significant gaps between. Cottage gables and the treatment of side gardens is also of importance to the character of the Area



2. The centre of the Area from Station Road. Squire's Cottage and Barley Cottage beyond the Strangers Home are important from this viewpoint in defining the Area's character. The pub and Beer House Cottage assist in the street scene though not to the same extent as the older cottages.



3. Acacia House and Milestones Cottage, with the listed 19th century milestone between. These listed cottages define the northern edge of the road junction, though the area of tarmac is now rather overwhelming.



4. This recent development by the Rural Housing Trust has an attractive relationship with the crinkle-crankle wall associated with Bradfield Place. The mature planting of the former vicarage and the churchyard are also important features in this view.



5. The outbuildings to the Strangers Home form an interesting group, along with the mature tree at the centre of this photograph. In other respects the grounds of the buildings are a disappointment, with poorly maintained surfaces and a wide range of frontage treatments.



6. The substantial timber hall opposite the Church of St. Lawrence is a significant feature on Harwich Road. Its mature planted setting softens its appearance, its poor repair detracts from the character and appearance of the Area.



7. Squire's Cottage is effectively an island site within the churchyard. As such its rear boundary of timber paneling is visually unsatisfactory and might be replaced with something more permanent.



8. Frontage planting and the setting back of these cottages make them neutral as far as the character of the Area is concerned. The houses on the north side of Mill Lane are unsympathetic in design terms, and the open aspect of the group gives it an appearance at variance with the good character of the Area.