

Wethersfield Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Client:
Braintree District Council

Date:
March 2023

Adopted:
August 2023





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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will provide an overview of the designation of the Wethersfield Conservation Area, outlining its designation history, alterations to the Conservation Area boundary, and highlighting the special interest of the area along with those buildings and features which contribute to its character. Conservation area designation gives broader protection than the listing of individual buildings, as it recognises all features within the area which form part of its character and ensures that planning decisions take the enhancement and preservation of the quality of the area into consideration.

The special interest of the Wethersfield Conservation Area is predominantly derived from its development as a small, rural historic settlement and the resulting characteristic architecture and landscape. Most notably this includes: the historic core to the north, following the linear development along the High Street; Silver Street; the Village Green; and the open fields and manorial land to the south. The southern part includes dispersed farmsteads and red brick walls flanking the southern approach to Manor House and Wethersfield Hall. The high density of listed buildings in the village centre, the prominent church, central Green, undulating topography and unusual red brick walls make positive contributions to the special interest of Wethersfield Conservation Area, enhancing its rural character and offering quality examples of vernacular timber framed buildings.

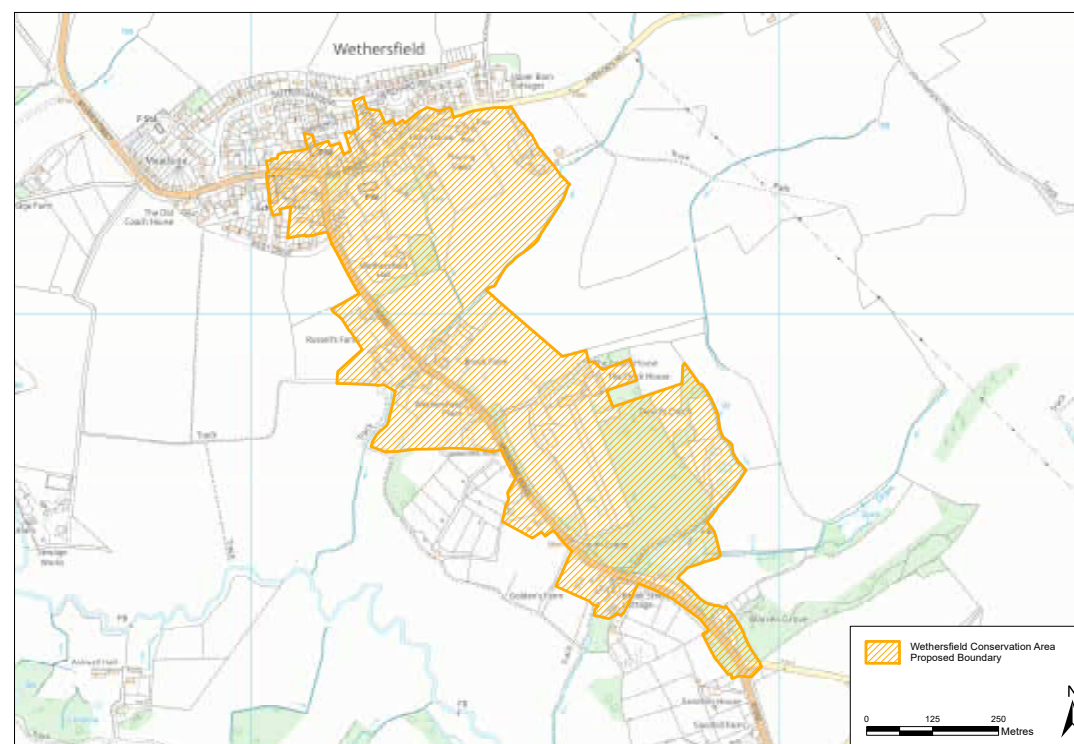


Figure 1 Wethersfield Conservation Area (2023)



In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, a review of the Conservation Area boundary has been undertaken and this appraisal reflects the adopted changes. When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest. As a result of the boundary review, some areas have been excluded from the Conservation Area, which do not possess the requisite special architectural or historic interest.

Figure 1 depicts the extent of the Wethersfield Conservation Area, as revised for this appraisal. For details of the revision history of the boundary, please see section "2.4 Revisions to the Boundary" on page 12.

These areas may have historical associations with the village, as part of the pastoral hinterland upon which Wethersfield has relied for centuries, but they lack the necessary special architectural or historic interest necessary for inclusion within the Conservation Area. However, these spaces, now positioned outside the boundary, form an important element of the Conservation Area's setting, allowing the significance of the Conservation Area to be appreciated. The description of the Conservation Area's setting and how it is important to preserve the particular attributes of setting which contribute to the area's significance, or allow it to be experienced and appreciated, can be found in section "3.3 The Setting of Wethersfield Conservation Area" on page 47.

1.2 Conserving Braintree's Heritage

Braintree District Council has appointed Place Services to prepare a conservation area appraisal for the village of Wethersfield. This conservation area appraisal and management document is provided as baseline information for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development in Wethersfield and its environs.

This appraisal provides an assessment of the historic development and character of Wethersfield and outlines its special interest. This will also consider the significance of individual heritage assets and the contribution that these, along with their setting, make to the character and special interest of the area. The understanding of significance will be used to assess the susceptibility of the Conservation Area to new development and highlighting key heritage assets of importance.

This assessment will consider how different character areas within Wethersfield Conservation Area came to be developed, their building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities can be used to assess the key characteristics of each area, highlighting potential impacts future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the overall character of Wethersfield. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and an analysis of the individual character areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) highlights good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context, the immediate and larger character of the area in which new development is sited.



This assessment follows best practice guidance, including Historic England's revised Historic England Advice Note 1 for Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2nd Edition 2019) and The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition 2017).

1.3 Purpose of this Appraisal

This document should be used as a baseline to inform future development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the Historic Environment and its unique character.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance outlined in the bibliography.

Applications that demonstrate a genuine understanding of the character of a conservation area are more likely to produce good design and good outcomes for agents and their clients. This appraisal will strengthen understanding of Wethersfield Conservation Area and its development, informing future design.

1.4 Planning Policy Context

The legislative framework for conservation and enhancement of conservation areas and listed buildings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990).

In particular Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas, and Section 72 requires that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced.

Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposal for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. National planning policy in relation

to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in Part 16 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment) of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, the NPPF (February 2021).

The Wethersfield Conservation Area, which is the subject of this appraisal, is located within the area covered by Braintree District Council. Local planning policy is set out in the Braintree Development Plan. The Braintree Local Plan 2033 is in two parts: **Part 1** which contains strategic policies also covering Colchester City and Tendring Councils and **Part 2** which relates to Braintree District only.

The New Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2017 and adopted by the Council in July 2022.

Relevant Policies within the Braintree District Local Plan are:

- SP 7 Place Shaping Principles
- LPP 52 – Layout and design of development
- LPP 53 – Conservation Areas
- LPP 54 - Demolition in Conservation Areas
- LPP 55 – Shop fronts, fascias and signs in Conservation Areas
- LPP 56 – Illuminated signs in Conservation Areas
- LPP 57 – Heritage Assets and their setting
- LPP 58 – Demolition of Listed Buildings or structures
- LPP 63 – Archaeological Evaluation Excavation and Recording
- LPP 62 – Cemeteries and churchyards
- LPP 65 – Tree protection

The latest policy position and Development Plan Documents can be found in the Planning Policy section of the Council's website: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/planning-building-control>

2. Wethersfield Conservation Area

2.1 Context and General Character

The village of Wethersfield is located in the northern half of Braintree District (NGR TL71153125). It is sited on a slight promontory formed by the junction of the Pant valley and a tributary, the Wethersfield Brook. The ground rises up to the village, from OD 58m at Brook Farm to OD 73m at Hudson's Hill on the eastern edge of the village. The historic village developed at the junction between the Braintree to Finchingfield Road (B1053) and also a road to Sible Hedingham. The junction forms a small triangular green. The road is slightly sunken, with many of the buildings on plots higher than the carriageway. The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene is located on the southern side of the village. The village is clearly historic in origin, with the two roads flanked by largely historic buildings, many of them late medieval or early post-medieval in origin.

Modern development is largely confined to the Saffron Gardens housing estate to the north of the High Street and a smaller development to the south-west of the road junction at West Drive. Neither of these modern developments are located within the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area's boundary is unusual, in that it incorporates a large amount of open land to the south of the historic settlement.

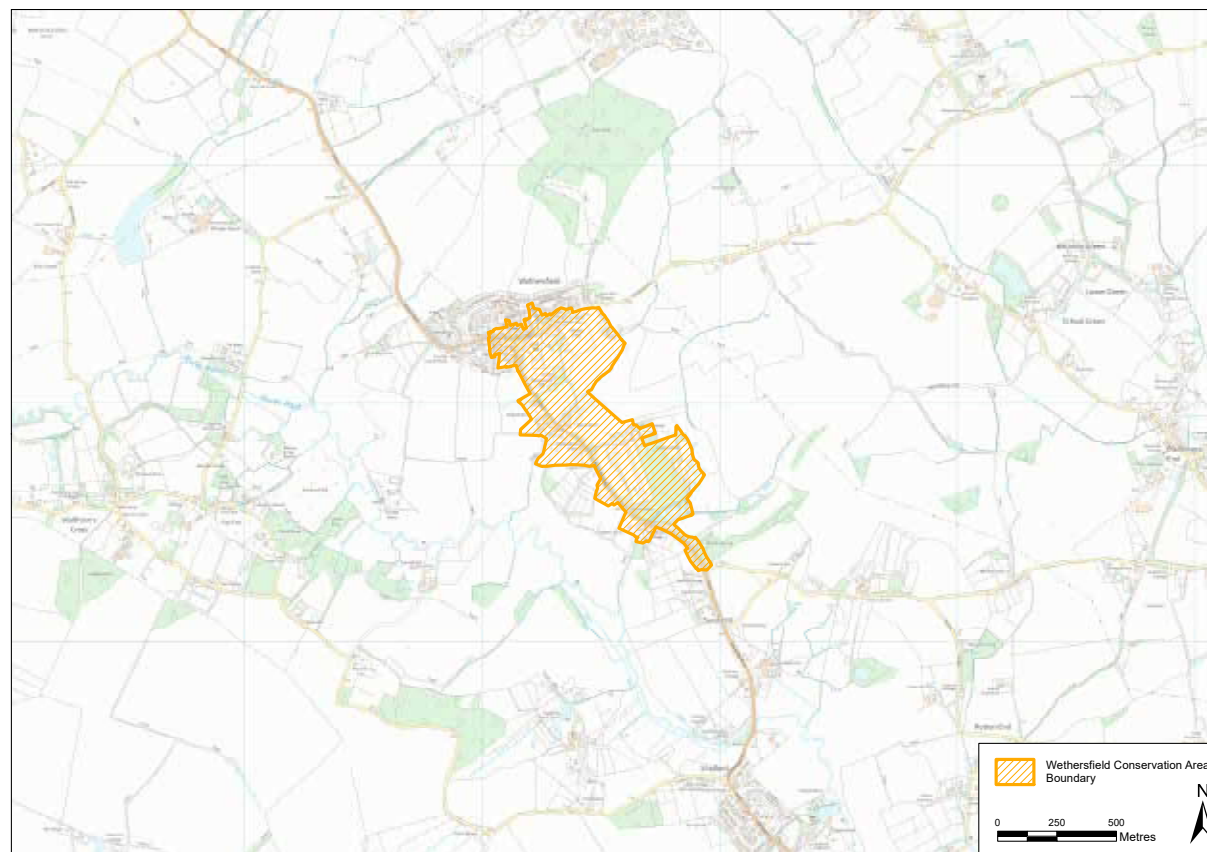


Figure 2 Wethersfield Conservation Area (2023) within its wider context

2.2 Origin and Evolution

Wethersfield is first recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) when it was held by Picot from the King, having been held by Earl Algar in 1066. It was already a reasonably large holding, with 43 households. In 1086 there was arable land for 13 plough-teams and a large amount of woodland (sufficient for 500 pigs), as well as meadows and two mills. In addition to the main manorial holding there were other smaller land-holdings, of which two were held by priests before the Conquest, and a third mill. At this date all of the mills would have been water-mills, presumably located on the River Pant and the Wethersfield Brook.

The historic village is focussed on the junction of the Braintree Road, High Street and Silver Street. The junction forms a small triangular green. The road is slightly sunken, with many of the buildings on plots that are higher than the carriageway.

The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene is located on the southern side of the village, on the eastern side of the junction. The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene has a possibly pre-Conquest nave, with ongoing additions and remodelling throughout the medieval period. The tower is early thirteenth century, and the chancel is early fourteenth century in origin.

Wethersfield Hall is located approximately 130m to the south of the Church, and was accessed by a lane from the High Street next to the Churchyard and a second lane from the Braintree Road. The Manor of Wethersfield was held by Henry de Cornhill, Bailiff of London in 1190, and then by the Nevill family in the thirteenth century. The Parsonage (now Parsonage Farm) was situated on the eastern edge of the village.

Dispersed farms and cottages were positioned along the Braintree Road led into the village; these were not as densely grouped as those within the historic core of the village.



Figure 3 Excerpt from the 1777 Chapman and André map showing Wethersfield and its immediate environs

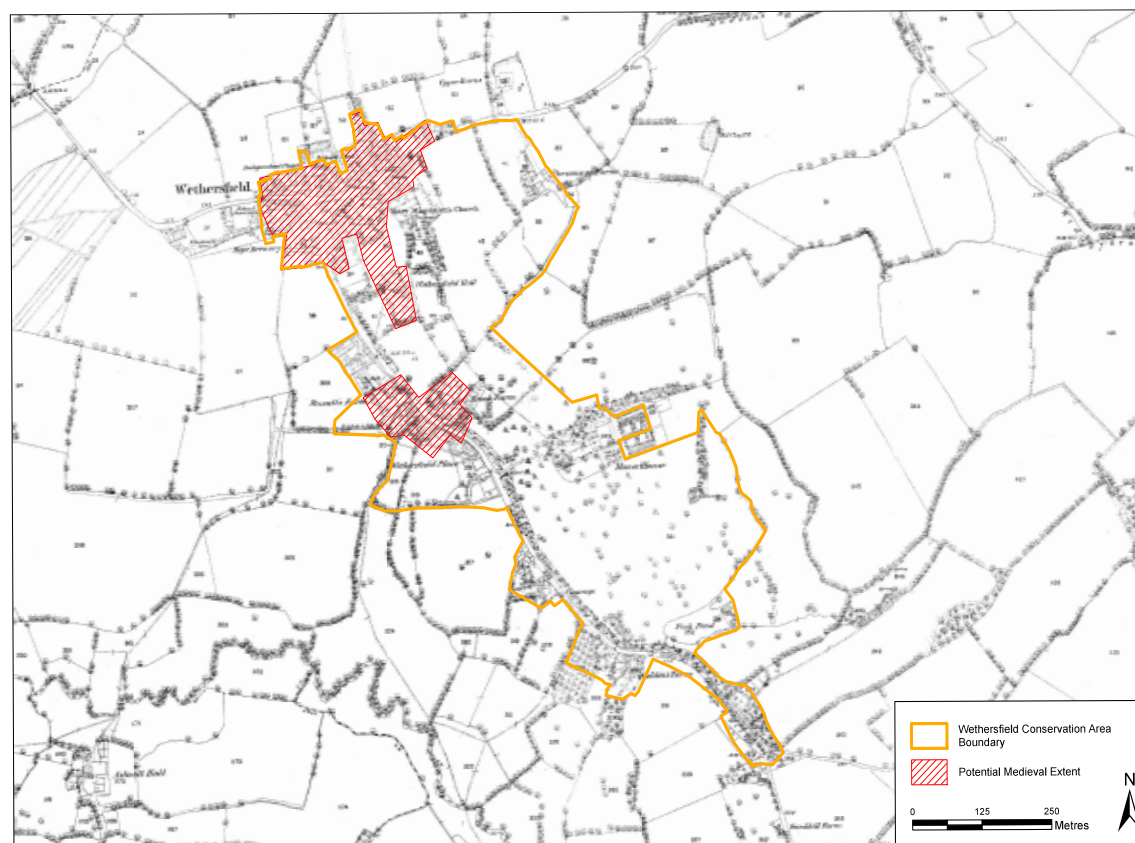


Figure 4 Potential Medieval extent in Wethersfield

A number of medieval buildings survive in Wethersfield, in addition to the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene. Brook Farmhouse on the Braintree Road has late thirteenth/early fourteenth century origins, before being altered in the sixteenth century. On the High Street, Trodds Garage is a fifteenth century hall house, and The Gables and Church Hill House are late fifteenth or early sixteenth century timber-framed houses with later alterations.

The sixteenth century in Wethersfield appears to have been associated with a period of growth, or at least of rebuilding, with many of the listed buildings on the northern side of the High Street dating to this period – it is not known what proportion of these may have incorporated earlier fabric. To the south, Russell's Farm is largely seventeenth century in date. There was a phase of nineteenth century building within the village, most notably with the United Reformed Church (formerly the Congregational Chapel), which is located on the north side of the Green. A chapel was constructed on the site in 1707, and was rebuilt in 1822, before being enlarged in 1861. The former schoolroom was constructed in 1876 in the Gothic Revival style. To the right of the approach to the chapel is the late sixteenth century Manse.

The industries associated with Wethersfield are typical of rural Essex settlements, comprising milling, brewing and brick-making. The Wethersfield or Hope Brewery site, on the south-western corner of the road junction, is a complex formed of a number of extant components of a large nineteenth century village brewery, comprising a brewhouse, malthouse, brewery owner's house, public house and stabling. There was a second malthouse to the rear of Brook Farm; part of the kiln of this structure survives.

A windmill, known as South Mill, was depicted on the 1777 Chapman and André map to the south of the eighteenth century village, and another is depicted on the western side of the village on the 1881 first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map.

Russell's Farm Brickyard, Finchingfield, manufactured bricks and tiles in the 1840's to 1850s. It was located to the south-west of the village to the rear of Russell's Farm. John Giblin was the owner and occupier of this brickyard and kiln until succeeded by Charles Davey, circa 1844. At the time of his death in 1850, Charles Davey held wind and water mills in addition to this brick kiln. His father, Matthias Davey was a miller at South Mill, Wethersfield by 1782 until 1810 when Charles Davey went took it over. Charles Davey also purchased a post mill (which stood near his West Mill) from the executors of John Livermore, formerly a farmer and miller of Wethersfield. This was a newly built post mill probably erected c.1806. There is no further reference to it after 1814 and it is presumed that it was demolished.

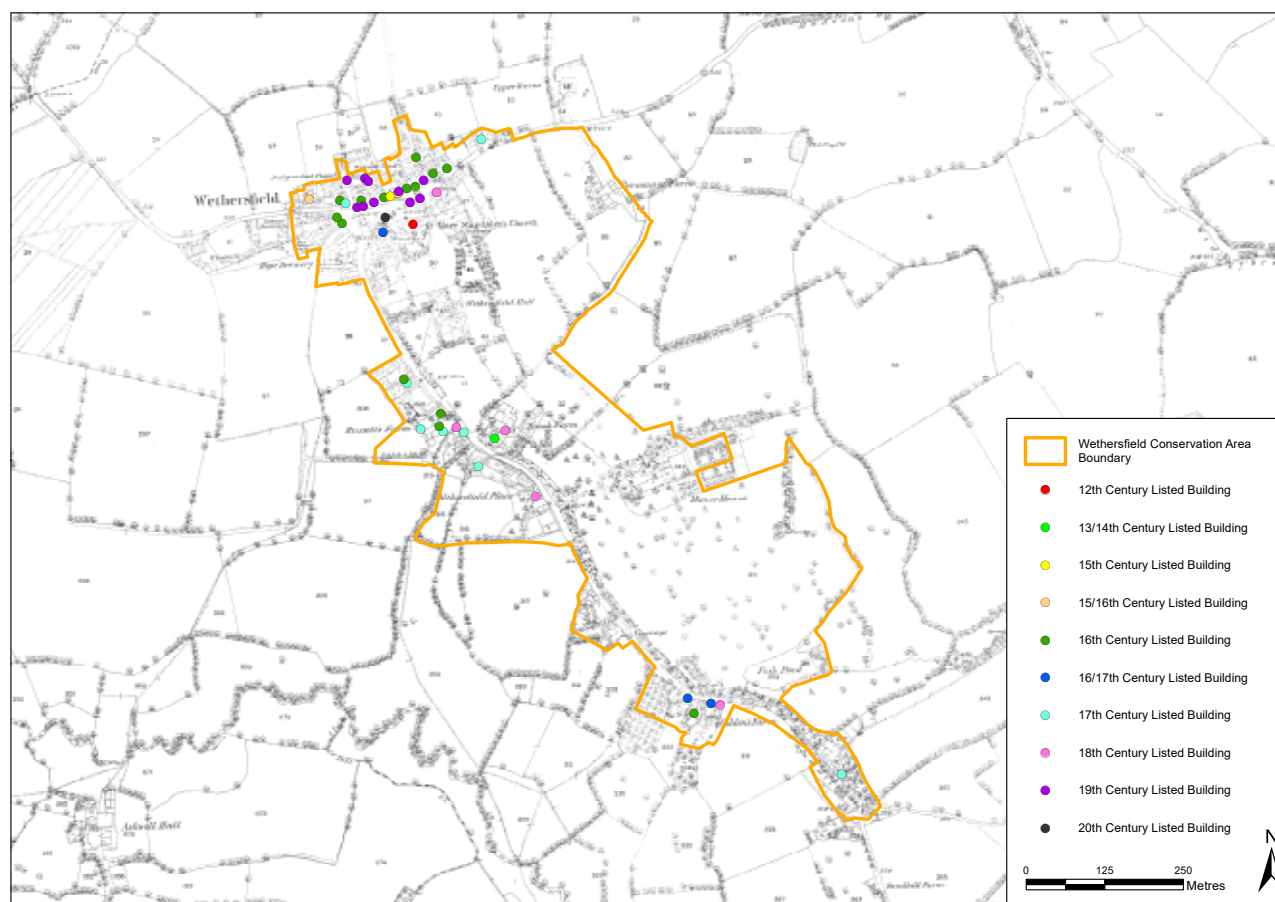
The Manor House, located 600m to the south-west of the Church, is depicted on the 1881 first edition OS map, and it is not shown on the 1777 map. It had formal gardens and an area of parkland. The current building is on the site of former Dobbins Farmhouse, (as shown on the 1724 'Plan of the Alexandra Palace and Park' by Bland Joseph, Parker Samuel, Smyth Payler and Warburton John). However, it is now known how much if any for this building survives, as a fire originated in this earlier part of the house in 1933, and the western wing was rebuilt as a result. The Manor House now comprises of an early nineteenth century high status building.

The immediate surroundings of the village are overwhelmingly agrarian in character, as they would have been during the entirety of its existence. To the west of the village, cropmarks show where smaller fields have been amalgamated to form larger fields.

Twentieth century built development has been largely confined to the north of the conservation area Conservation Area, with few areas of infill within the historic core. This development includes the Saffron Gardens housing estate to the north of the High Street, and a smaller development to the south-west of the road junction at West Drive. The introduction of the playing fields expanded the village to the east and provided a key, communal public space for the residents of



Figure 5 Kiln at Wethersfield, ERO (Ref IMb 397-1-3)



Wethersfield, where useable public realm spaces had previously been lacking.

Figure 6 Post-medieval Wethersfield. The Listed Buildings have been superimposed over the first edition OS map (1881)

2.3 Designation of the Conservation Area

Wethersfield Conservation Area was designated in 1973. The extent of the Conservation Area was mapped, but there has been no accompanying Character Appraisal or Management Plan.

In 1988 Braintree District Council produced a booklet on 'Conservation Areas and Historic Buildings in Braintree District' which in the introduction makes comment that 'The 1967 Civic Amenities Act introduced the concept of conservation areas as a basis for safeguarding areas of special architectural or historic interest thereby acknowledging that the quality of the architectural interest lay not only in the buildings themselves but in building groups and entire environments.' The criteria for conservation area designation include the setting of the conservation areas 8a. Landscape setting/topography (settlement in valley, hilltop or ridge), 8b. Settlement landscape: village greens, ponds, trees, riverside setting.

2.4 Revisions to the Boundary

As part of this review, the Conservation Area boundary has been revised to reflect modern practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Wethersfield's unique historic built environment. A map which highlights the changes is included on the following page, as Figure 7.

Justification for the Boundary Revisions

The NPPF (2021, para. 191) states that 'When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest'.

The significance of the Wethersfield Conservation Area is derived from its historic settlement pattern and its high-quality buildings of historic and architectural merit. The Conservation Area has been divided into three distinct character areas, the historic village centre, Wethersfield Hall and Russel's Farm area and the manor House area (see Section 3.3). The varying elements of Wethersfield's historic settlement pattern is legible in these three areas and the rural setting of the Conservation Area enhances the observer's ability to experience and appreciate that significance.

The Glossary of the NPPF defines setting as 'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral' (NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary).

Wethersfield Conservation Area was designated in 1973 and no review of its boundary has been undertaken since its designation. Since 1973 the understanding of conservation and heritage issues, such as significance and setting, has evolved significantly, partly due to the pressure from development. This evolution of understanding has been reflected in the latest iteration of planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework and its associated guidance.

Throughout England it is impossible to find an area of land, field, paddock, plantation or meadow that does not have a long history of use, cultivation or ownership. Yet this alone does not provide sufficient historical significance worthy of Conservation Area designation. An area would need to have special architectural or historic interest for such designation and it is solely in order to ensure the robustness of the Wethersfield Conservation Area, that those parts lacking the necessary special interest have been excluded. However, open areas that have been excluded form an important part of the setting of the

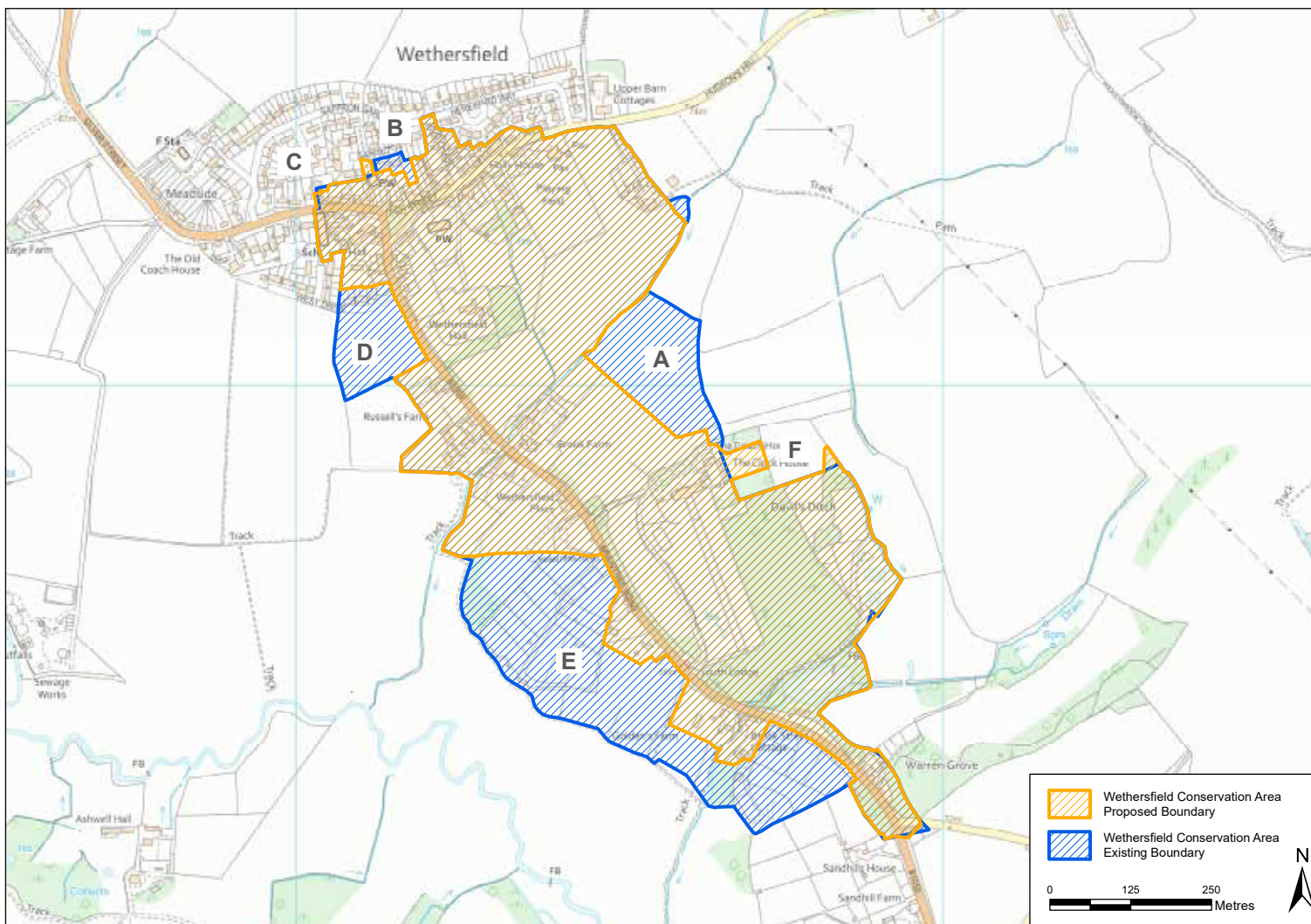


Figure 7 Map showing the revisions to the 1973 Conservation Area Boundary

Conservation Area. The undeveloped pastoral character of the setting contributes to the Conservation Area's significance and allows that significance to be appreciated. The setting of the Conservation Area is discussed in detail in section 3.4.

Any application for inappropriate development within the setting of the Conservation Area would therefore be considered unacceptable, if it failed to preserve the elements of setting that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area (or which better reveal its significance). Therefore, the local authority would actively support proposals that retain the open, pastoral character of the Conservation Area's setting. Any development proposals that fail to retain this character would not be favourably judged by the local planning authority as there would be a detrimental impact on the significance of the Conservation Area. This forms a strong and clear argument for the retention and preservation of the pastoral character of the Conservation Area's setting and the contribution it makes to its significance.

The removal of open meadows and fields that do not have special architectural or historic interest and their subsequent characterisation as part of the Conservation Area's setting, is essential in order to ensure the continued strength of protection the Conservation Area designation brings.

The Boundary Changes

Please refer to Figure 7 and the numbered areas described in the text below.

Area A

This area has been excluded from the east of the former Conservation Area boundary. It is currently an agricultural field and is shown as being under arable cultivation on the 1842 Tithe Apportionment. Similarly, the field is shown as being one of the many agricultural fields of the Manor House Estate, within the landscape to the east of the

village, in maps relating to the sale of the estate in 1877. The area excluded therefore has a history of agricultural use and a functional connection to the village, which it shares with many of the fields in the wider landscape. To the west and north of Area A, the open area belonging to the Manor was landscaped and the entry drive up to the Manor was known to have originally run through this area, with a gated entrance off the High Street, to the east of St Mary Magdalene Church. Therefore, this area, with its historic special interest, and its landscaped character, can be easily distinguished from Area A, the cultivated land to the east. The boundary has therefore been redrawn to retain the open land with historic special interest in the form of the designed and landscaped approach to the Manor but exclude the agricultural field to the east. The excluded area forms a valuable part of the agricultural setting of the Conservation Area and this is discussed in detail in Section 3.4.

Area B

To the north of the Conservation Area, numbers 3 and 4 Saffron Close have been excluded. The semi-detached dwellings were built in the late twentieth century and lack architectural or historic special interest. In appearance they do not contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

Area C

The boundary has been extended to include the southern part of the Congregational Graveyard, containing well maintained open green space of historical interest and forming a strong relationship with the United Reformed Church.

Area D

Area D is an open meadow to the south of West Drive. Prior to the development of West Drive the meadow was more extensive and the area is known to have been used as the site of village cricket matches in the past. The area is flanked to the west by a public footpath (PROW 117_10) and the open space allows important views towards the village



and the Conservation Area. However, while the space is close to the village core and has been utilised by the village in the past, the space does not have sufficient architectural or historic interest in its own right to justify inclusion within the Conservation Area. Yet as an element of setting, its undeveloped and pastoral character makes a valuable contribution to the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area's setting is discussed in detail in Section 3.3.

Area E

The open meadows and paddocks to the south-west within Area E have a history of agricultural use and doubtless a historical connection to the nearby properties of Wethersfield Place, Parkside, the Vicarage and Goldens Farm. Much of Area E is still sub-divided to form paddocks, while other areas are more wooded or open meadows. However, in its own right Area E does not have sufficient architectural or historic interest to justify inclusion within the Conservation Area. Yet, as a setting, the pastoral character of the area provides an important element that makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, allowing its significance and special interest to be appreciated.

Area F

The boundary has been extended to include the walled gardens of the former Manor House. Thus, the parts of the manorial estate, that retain the requisite special architectural or historic interest, have been brought into the Conservation Area boundary.

Appropriate alternative designation for excluded open areas

While areas that have been excluded lack the architectural and historic special interest worthy of Conservation Area designation, they may qualify for Local Green Space designation. Historic England describe this as a discretionary designation, to be made by inclusion within a local development plan or neighbourhood development plan.

The designation should only be used where the land is not extensive, is local in character and reasonably close to the community; and, where it is demonstrably special, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife. Policies within the local development plan or neighbourhood development plan for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with the policies protecting green belts within the NPPF. Where a community wishes to take up the opportunities offered by neighbourhood planning, the legislation enables a parish or town council, a neighbourhood forum, or a community organisation to lead in the formation of a local development plan and designations such as Local Green Spaces.

2.5 Designated Heritage Assets

There are 44 listed buildings within the Conservation Area (see Appendices 6.2). Of these, the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene is Grade I listed, and there are two of Grade II*: Simm's Farmhouse and St George's House. The remainder are Grade II listed. The location of these assets is shown on Figure 8.

2.6 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. There are a number of processes through which non-designated heritage assets may be identified, including the local and neighbourhood plan-making processes and conservation area appraisals and reviews. In some cases, local planning authorities may also identify non-designated heritage assets as part of the decision-making process on planning applications.

A map showing non-designated heritage assets within and surrounding Wethersfield Conservation Area which are recorded on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) is included as Figure 9.

There is currently no adopted list of buildings of local historical and/or architectural interest in the District. In 2017 Braintree District Council, in partnership with Place Services, began the process of reviewing built development within Wethersfield to assess suitability for inclusion in a local list. At present no non-designated heritage assets within Wethersfield have been considered for inclusion, however, buildings within the Conservation Area which should be considered for inclusion are identified below.

These buildings have been identified as they are either considered to be good examples of their type or architectural style, are prominent local landmarks, demonstrate use of local materials or design features, or are connected to local historical events, activities or people, and are all relatively complete in their survival. Other buildings within the Conservation Area that make a beneficial contribution to the area's character may also be identified in the future as non-designated heritage assets, during the decision-making process on planning applications.

- The Wethersfield or Hope Brewery site (HER 15973), including: the Brewhouse; brewery malthouse, now the village hall; 'Hillfoot House', the former brewery owner's house; the Brewery Tap public house; and the former stables;
- Wethersfield Hall; and
- The Manor House and its associated buildings.

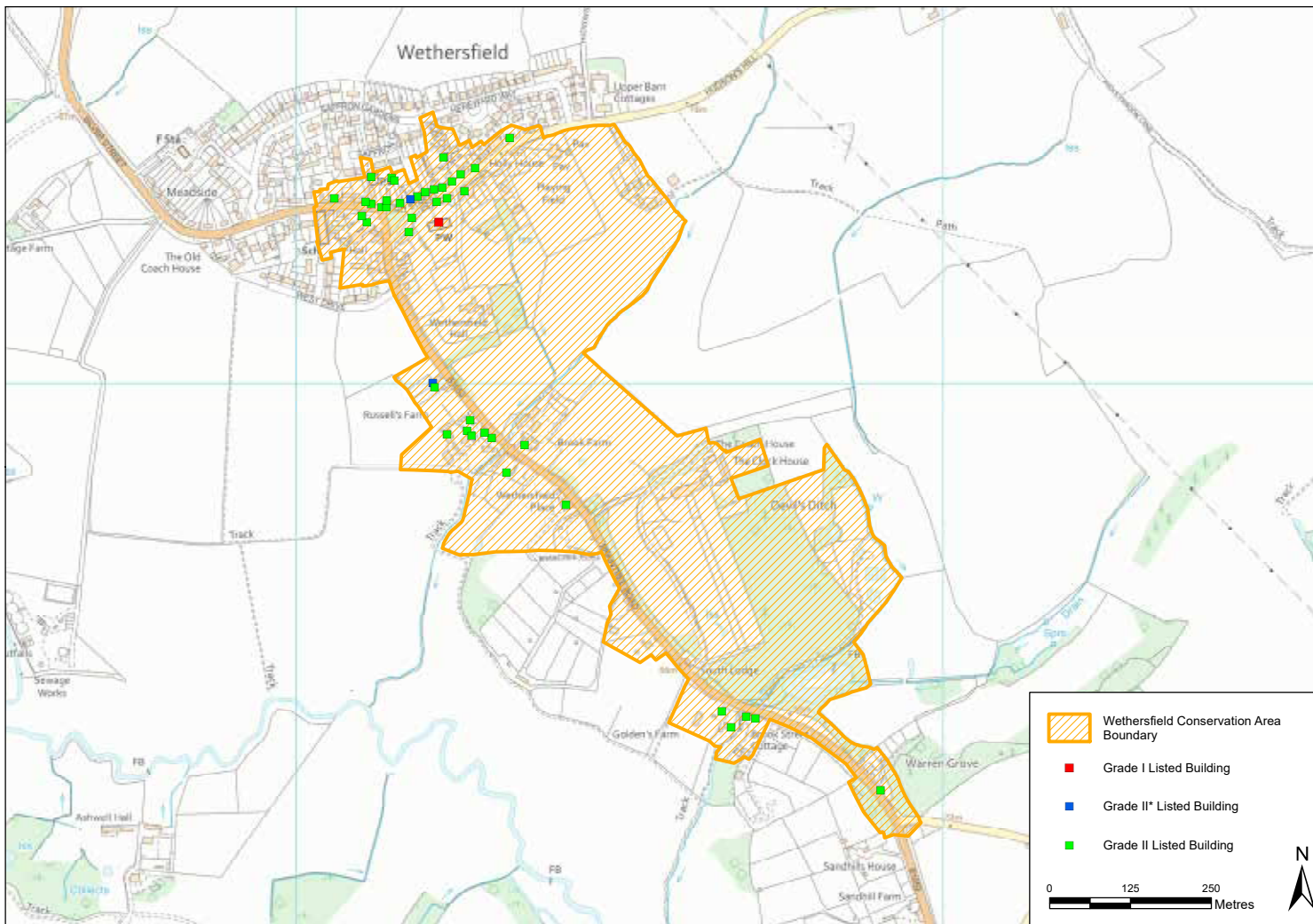


Figure 8 Designated Heritage Assets within Wethersfield Conservation Area

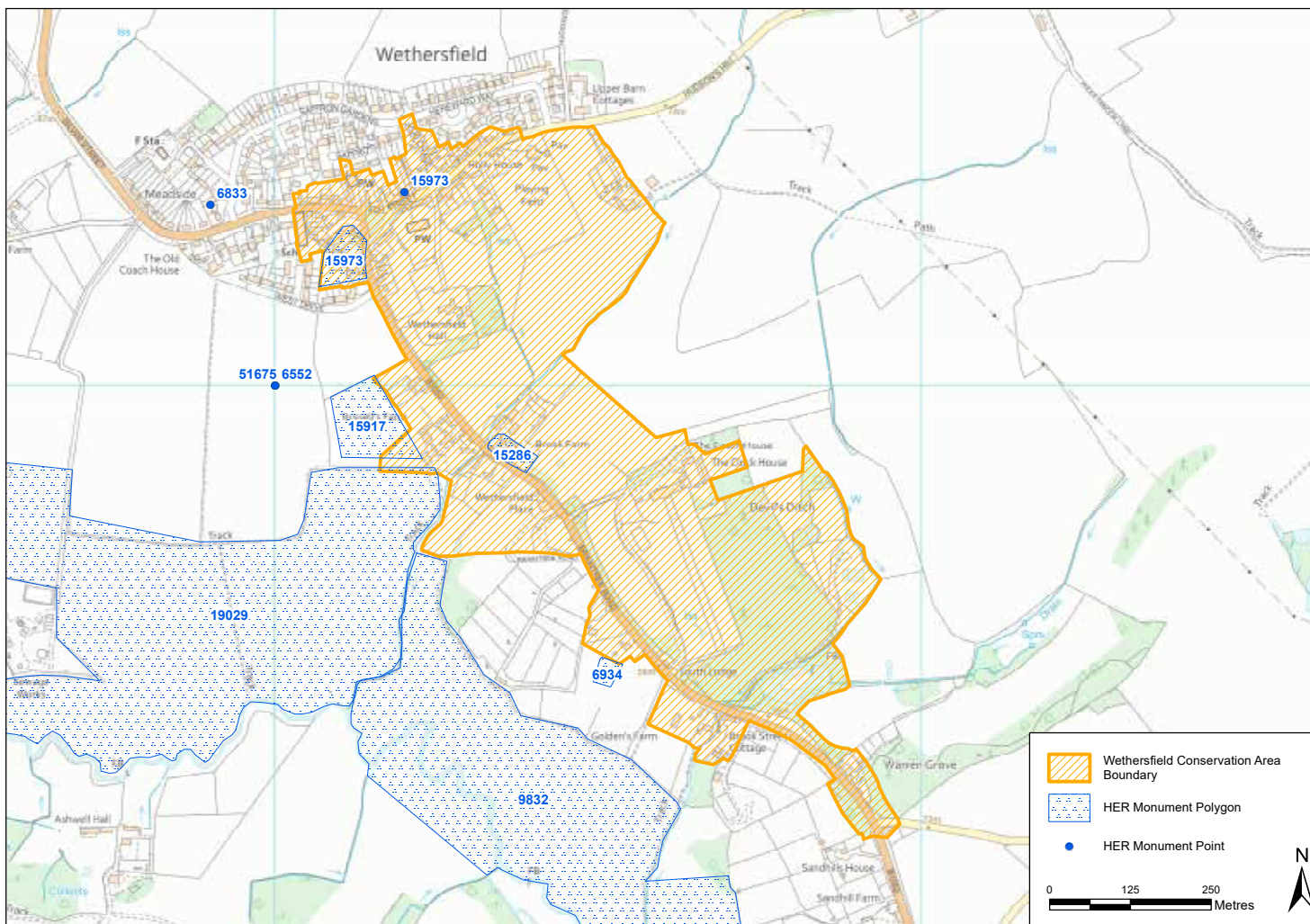


Figure 9 Map showing Non-Designated Heritage Assets Within and Surrounding the Conservation Area

2.7 Heritage at Risk

The Grade II Listed Barn, approximately 12 metres South West of Russell's Farmhouse, is currently in state of deterioration, and is considered to be at risk from further deterioration and potential loss of fabric. It will require maintenance and appropriate repairs.

It is also considered that the red brick walls in the Conservation Area are regularly assessed and maintained, as these form a unique feature of the Conservation Area and contribute to its significance, and parts could be lost if remedial works are not undertaken.

2.8 Archaeological Potential

There has been no archaeological fieldwork within Wethersfield to date. However excavations in neighbouring Great Bardfield have demonstrated the survival of below-ground archaeological deposits relating to the origins and development of the settlement, and there is no reason to believe that Wethersfield would be any different. Whilst settlement evidence is more likely to be sited along the street frontage, the backyard areas will contain evidence for ancillary activity, such as wells, cess-pits, yards and middens, as well as industrial activity. The soil-type is conducive to the survival of bone and ceramics, and there is the potential for significant palaeoenvironmental deposits associated with the River Pant. Waterlogged deposits can also be anticipated within deeper features such as wells and cess-pits.

3. Assessment of Significance

3.1 Summary

Introduction

The special interest of Wethersfield is derived mainly from its historic settlement pattern, which is still discernible in the existing landscape, and high-quality buildings of historic and architectural merit. The historic housing stock is in good condition across the Conservation Area, with buildings ranging from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Modern development has largely been confined to the north of and east of the Conservation Area, leaving the historic core as predominantly historic in terms of its building stock.

Its open manorial and farm character to the south also contributes to its special interest, the open fields juxtaposing with the brick walls and historic hedgerows which line the route north to the village centre.

The topography of the Conservation Area also contributes to its character; undulation within the village core provides a varied roofscape and street scene and elevates buildings surrounding the Green to create a visually appealing core to the village. The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene and The Manor House are located on high ground, on either side of the valley; this creates inter-visibility between the two and creates views from within and towards the Conservation Area.

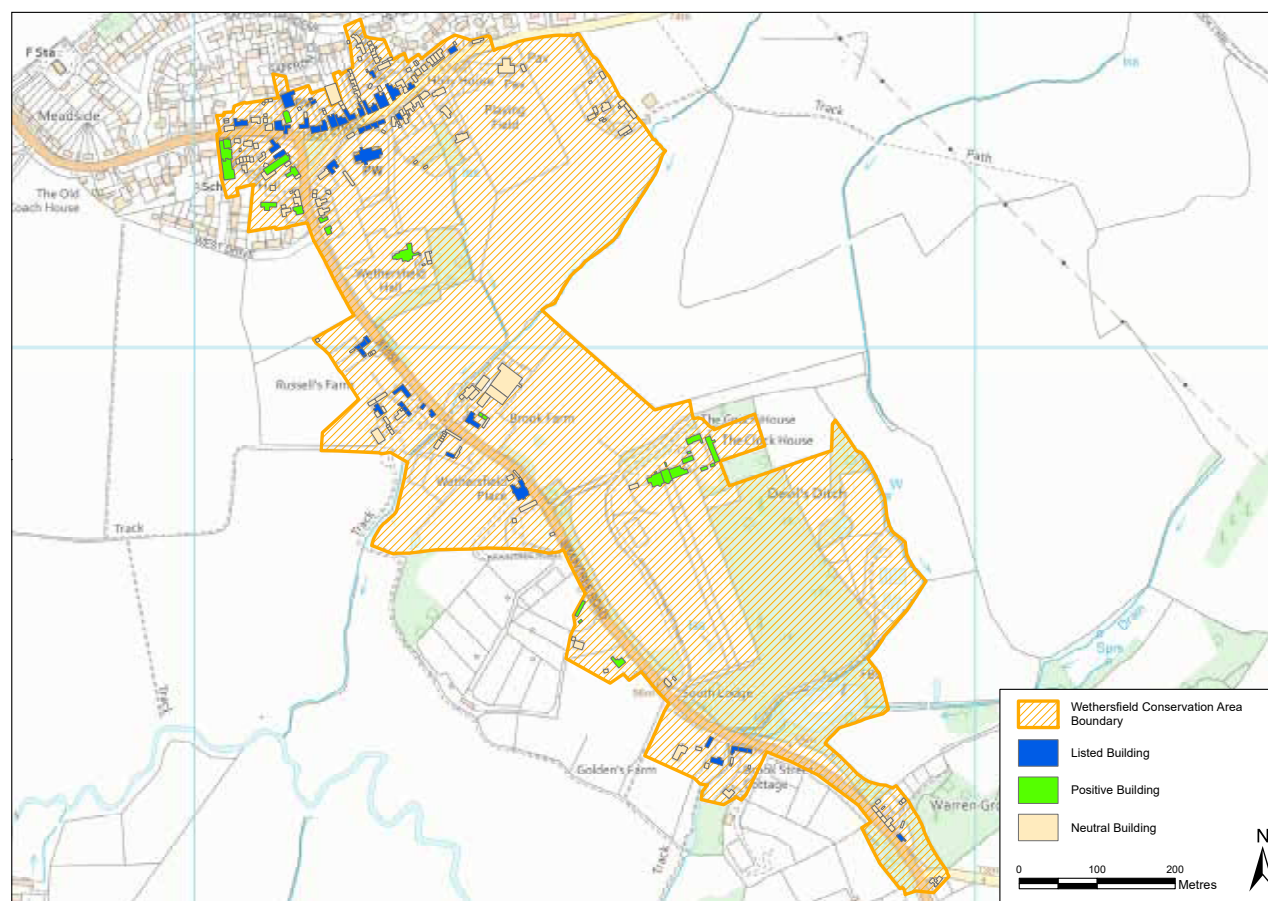


Figure 10 Map of Significant Features in the Wethersfield Conservation Area

Built Environment

The late medieval and post-medieval housing stock is in good condition throughout the village; as such, a number of buildings make a positive contribution to the area. These, along with neutral, negative and listed buildings, are highlighted in Figure 10.

Land Usage

The conservation area predominantly comprises of residential buildings to the north, with some commercial elements and amenity buildings such as the school, churches, playing field, and former breweries. To the south, the conservation area consists of some residential buildings, including Manor House, Wethersfield Hall and dispersed farmsteads, set within agricultural land.

Key Views

Key types of views are identified below, although this list is not comprehensive and other views of significance may be identified during decision-making process on planning applications. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should consider the types views below and any others which may be relevant or bespoke to that proposal. It is also notable how these views alter in character between winter and summer months which must be taken into account.

- Type 1 Open views towards the settlement;
- Type 2 Designed views between notable buildings;
- Type 3 Views out to the agrarian landscape;
- Type 4 Views of notable buildings;
- Type 5 Views of notable spaces;
- Type 6 Medium distance developing views;
- Type 7 Views from alleys and narrow streets; and
- Type 8 Glimpsed views throughout the Conservation Area.

Some key views of these types have identified based on the above criteria. Note the views included are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there are numerous other views of significance. Examples of these view types are identified on Figure 11.

- Type 1 Towards the settlement from the public footpath which adjoins the settlement at West Drive;
- Type 2 Views between Manor House and the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene;
- Type 3 South and south east from the churchyard of St Mary Magdalene;
- Type 4 Towards the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene's from the village Green;
- Type 5 East and west along Silver Street;
- Type 5 West from Braintree Road towards the Brewery;
- Type 6 North East from Public Right of Way towards the village centre; and
- Type 7 North from Dog Chase towards open fields.

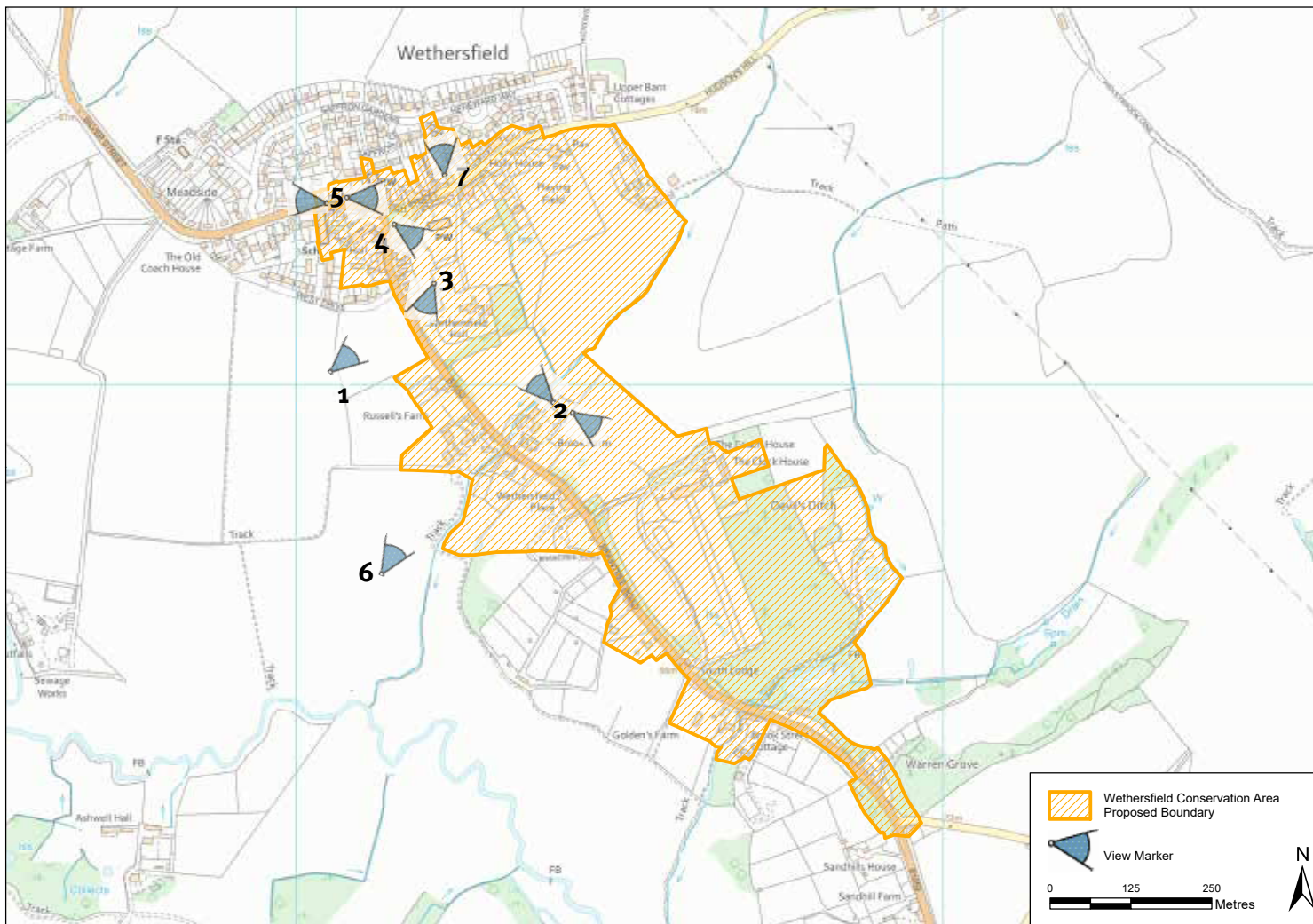


Figure 11 A Selection of Key Views

Landscaping and Open Spaces

There are several key areas of green space within the Conservation Area. They make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area in that they are visually appealing elements of the village, however they do not provide public realm or amenities for congregation and village activity. The later addition of the recreation ground to the east reflects this.

The most significant open space from a public realm perspective within the Conservation Area is, arguably, the central village Green [Figure 12]. The Green is located at the village's main junction of three arterial routes, creating a space where the buildings which surround it can be appreciated. The land slopes to the north, creating aesthetic views of the Green and giving it more prominence in these views. The Green is planted with mature plain trees. This makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Uncharacteristically within the Conservation Area, buildings which surround the Green are also set back from the street behind smaller areas of grassed verges. These visually enhance the street scene, providing an aesthetic break between the street and surrounding buildings; the generosity of this space also provides juxtaposition between the enclosed character of those streets which adjoin it, most notably perhaps Silver Street.

The churchyard of the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene [Figure 13] is another key area of green space within the Conservation Area. Its mature boundary trees are partially visible from the High Street and make a positive impact on the street scape. The churchyard itself provides an important area of public realm, of historical associative and communal value to the village, and consists of a well maintained and positive ecclesiastical setting to the church. The churchyard is enclosed by some buildings and planting to the north, however shares a visual link with fields to the south east, which enhance the rural landscape setting of the church, assisting in establishing a tranquil space of remembrance.



Figure 12 The Green looking west



Figure 13 The Churchyard

To the south of the village core, wide areas of open landscape form a significant feature of the Conservation Area. These fields and manorial grounds are reflective of historic land use, and have been retained to the south of the Conservation Area.

Traditional/Local Building Materials and Details

Buildings within the village core are constructed in materials which are regionally typical; in red brick with plaster rendering and handmade red clay tile roofs. Barn buildings to the south of the conservation area are clad in weatherboard with red clay tile roofs [Figure 15]. There are examples of later buildings which are red brick, or stucco, and slate roofs in the north of the conservation area, and some thatched cottages to the south. Red brick and plaster are the predominant building materials in buildings and boundary walls throughout the conservation area.

Architectural detailing is simple. Flat and arched lintels can be found on nineteenth century buildings [Figure 16], as well as some decorative brick coursing, pargetting and exposed timber beams [Figure 14]. Bow windows are also a common feature, and many buildings have retained sash windows. Cast iron and red brick boundary treatments are also common features across the conservation area.

Public Realm

Public realm is largely formed of pavements, roads and associated street signage to the north of the area. Many properties in the historic core front directly onto the pavement, and while some have land between their front doors and the street, this is often small and enclosed by boundary walls. Some buildings have steps leading to front doors above street level and several feature iron railings. This pattern of development has left little room for public realm features such as benches, bins, and street lighting along the High Street and Silver Street. There are some benches on the Green and a village sign [Figure 16]; however this area is predominantly sparse of street furniture.



Figure 14 Example of pargetting, exposed timber framing and brick work at Ivanhoe House



Figure 15 Weatherboarding and render, Russells Farm



Figure 16 Various window types and materials are present on The Green, yet the use of traditional materials and construction creates a unified appearance



Figure 17 View of Manor Park 1988 (ECC)

To the south of the area, the historic route often has stretches without a pavement, and there is no street furniture.

Beyond the Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area draws significance from the wider landscape. The former manorial park, associated with the Manor House, is located in the south of the area and south east of the House; this provides the Manor House's original setting, and contributes to our understanding of the heritage asset, and how we experience and interpret the heritage values of the Manor House and Conservation Area [Figure 17]. It is not, however, included in the Conservation Area, due to the significant change in land use and loss of original parkland features. These areas contribute positively to the setting of the Manor House and the setting of the Conservation Area; however they are no longer in themselves of significance.

Open fields to the south west and north of the area also make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area; they enhance our understanding of the development of the village within its rural landscape, and the valley topography allows for clear views from the village

and into the village from its arable setting. They also provide a clear distinction between the agrarian landscape, comprising of fields associated with each farm, and the village.

The playing fields to the north east of the area contribute to the Conservation Area's significance by forming an important part of its setting, enhancing the way in which it is experienced, understood and appreciated. They also form an area of open space which affords wide reaching views towards the south of the area.

The airfield to the north of the village is also a significant feature which contributes to the area. Although it is not visible from the village, the introduction of the airfield would have impacted on the village economically and socially during the war and is of historic and communal value to Wethersfield.

There is now considerable twentieth century housing to the north of the Conservation Area, which forms the immediate setting of the historic core. This has impacted the historic plan and detached the core from its agrarian landscape setting in the north.

3.2 Character Analysis

The Conservation Area is divided into three character areas reflecting the predominant land use, location and historic development of the village.

The three distinct character areas which comprise the Conservation Area are:

- The Historic Village Core (Character Area 1),
-
- The Wethersfield Hall and Russell's Farm area (Character Area 2), and
-
- The Manor House area (Character Area 3).

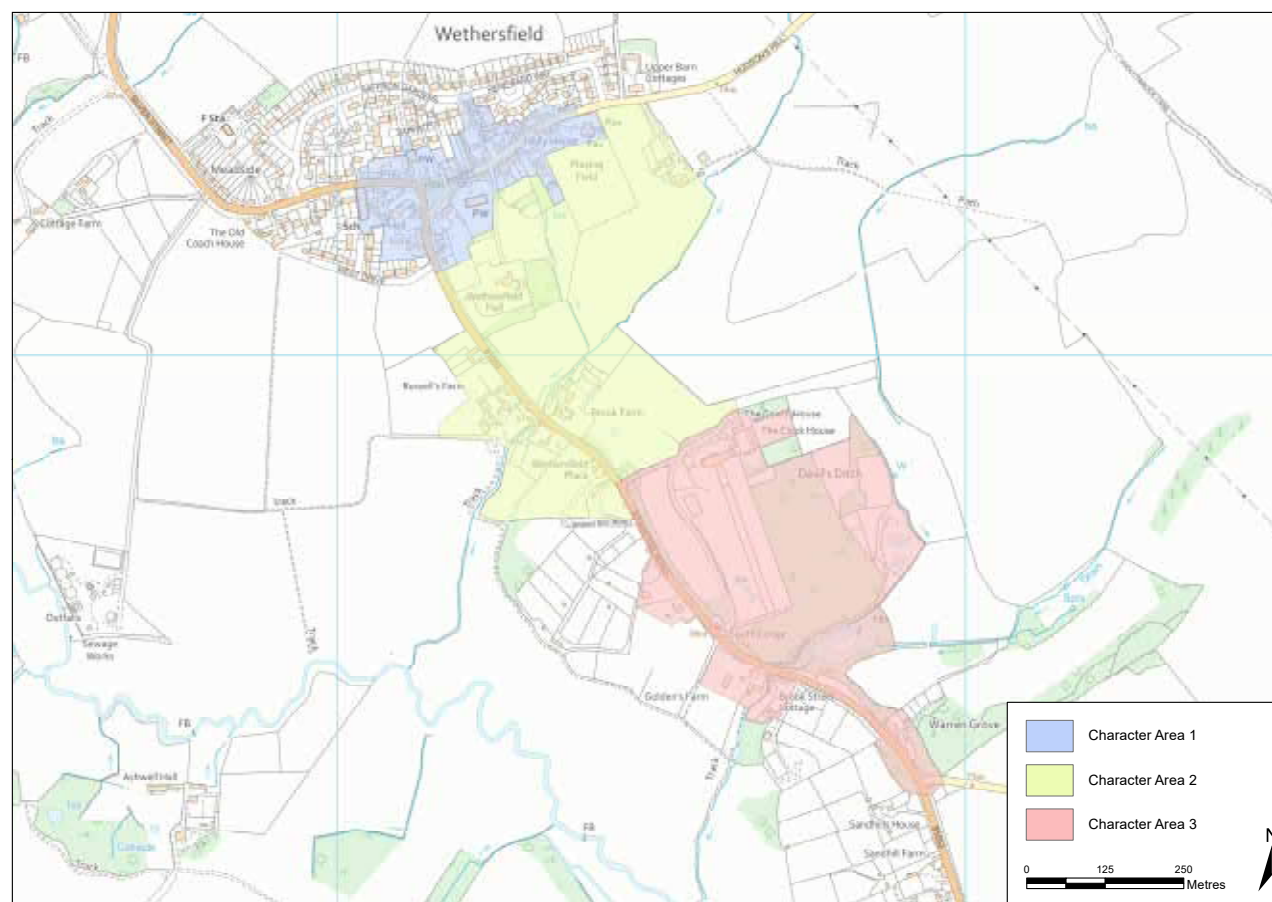


Figure 18 Map of the three Character Areas

Character Area 1: Historic Village Centre

This character area includes the historic core of the village, which is centred on the road junction [Figure 19]. The area consists of the majority of the built development in the conservation area, developed around the High Street, Silver Street and the Green. The area is formed of high land to the north, with the Green partly sunken, affording clear views of surrounding dwellings and sense of enclosure from within the village centre.

Streetscape and building materials

The building stock is largely formed of rendered timber frame buildings, often cream coloured with red clay tile roofs, and later nineteenth century red brick, with slate and plain tile roofs. The majority of buildings are residential and of a fairly small scale, typically ranging from 1.5 to 3 storeys (the latter being the exception rather than the rule). Gables, dormers and chimneys, combined with the gradual include in topography, create lively roofscapes. Windows and doors are typically of timber and single glazed, though there are exceptions, which has on occasion been to the detriment of the properties aesthetic value and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Historically the village has developed around the convergence of Silver Street, Braintree Road and High

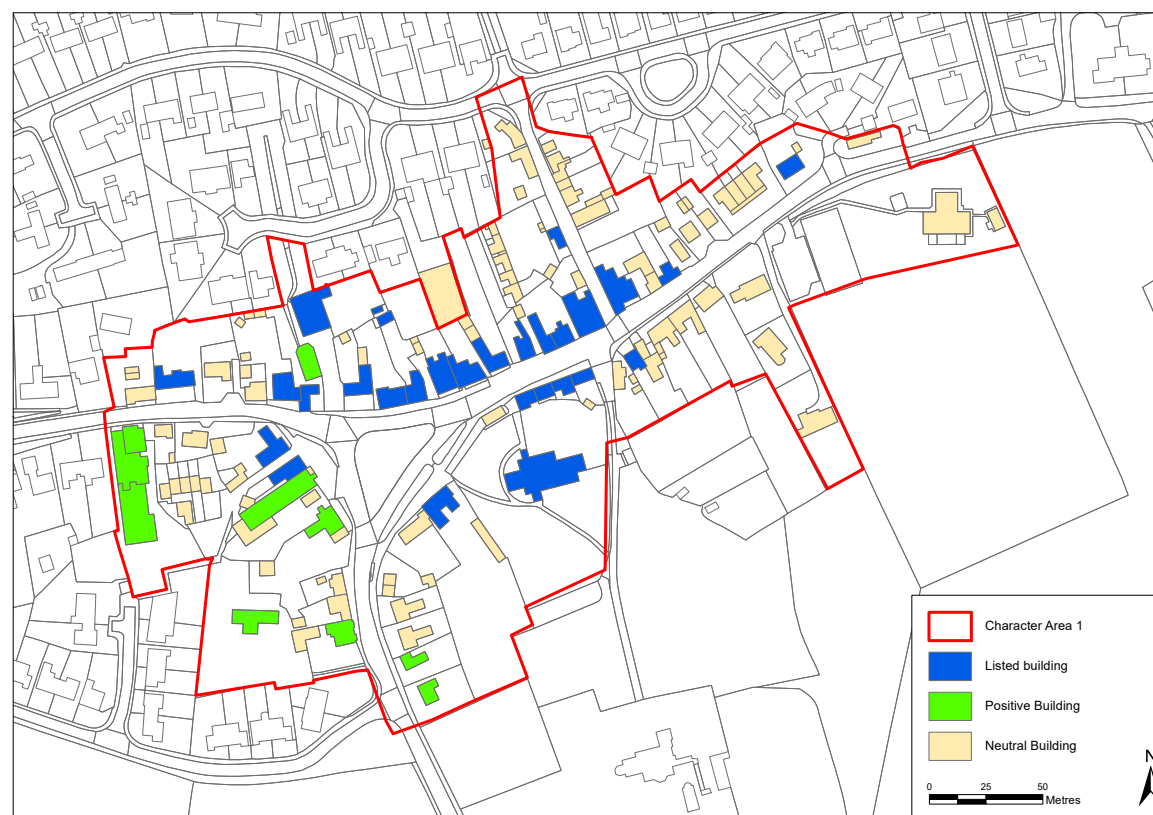


Figure 19 Map of listed, positive and neutral buildings in Character Area 1: Historic Village Centre



Figure 20 High Street looking east



Figure 21 Example of boundary treatment, Olive House Silver Street



Figure 22 Churchyard looking South East

Street, centred on the village Green. This has resulted in typically narrow plots, with buildings slightly set back from the pavement behind small front gardens or planting, sometimes defined by low brick walls or iron railings. This gives a strong sense of enclosure within the historic core [Figure 21]

Boundary treatments

Many dwellings have retained boundary treatment, formed of low brick walls and iron fencing, with planting in gardens. This contributes positively to the character of the area, with original plots well defined, well maintained and enhanced by planting which softens the streetscape [Figure 21].

Planting

With the exception of the central green and churchyard, soft landscaping (including trees and hedges) is primarily within private land. There are frequent examples of established planting in front gardens, and even houses which front onto the pavement and street have well maintained pots of climbing plants, to bring greenery to the streetscape. The garden of the Manse is particularly notable; in a prominent position overlooking the green, and set behind Grade II listed iron railings, the garden is planted with well-maintained box hedge parterre.

There is also substantial boundary planting within the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene's churchyard [Figure 22], which is visible from views towards the church.

Views

This area comprises of the following kinetic views:

- Continual views of church tower throughout conservation area;
- Glimpsed views of some areas of backland development (for example Dog

- Chase);
- Glimpsed views of Wethersfield Hall from the south of the area;
- Views towards the settlement from roads and PROW, as well as key properties (Manor House); and
- The topography of the area, together with differing building heights, gives layered views throughout the High Street.

There are limited outward views when within village, due to the building density and enclosed character.

Individual Listed Buildings

This character area includes the highest density of listed buildings along the historic high street and surrounding the village green. All of the Listed Buildings are Grade II unless otherwise stated.

North of Silver Street and High Street

To the north of the High Street, a high density of listed buildings forms the streetscape, all of which make a positive contribution to the historic character of the village.

Along Silver Street, The Gables is located at the north west end of the conservation area. The house is predominantly of fifteenth and sixteenth century, altered in eighteenth, twentieth and twenty first centuries. The building is timber framed, rendered (although previously clad with twentieth century weatherboards), and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The main range is of one storey with attics, dormer windows and gabled dormers.

Further east is Castle House, an early sixteenth century jettied and plastered timber framed building, of four bays and two storeys, with a handmade red clay tile roof. The



Figure 23 Castle House, High Street



Figure 24 United Reformed Church

house is set back from the road and enclosed by adjacent building, Chapel Cottage, to the east. Castle House was altered in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and now includes a stack at the left end, eighteenth century extension with gambrel roof to rear of right bay, twentieth century extensions to the rear, and twentieth century door and shop window in right bay. The building retains simple architectural features such as the four nineteenth century scrolled brackets below the jetty [Figure 23].

Adjoining Castle House at the east is Chapel Cottage. This early seventeenth century house, extended in the twentieth century, was possibly built as an extension to Castle House, although is now a separate dwelling. The house is timber framed, rendered, with handmade red clay tiles. A twentieth century extension extends to the north east, forming an L-plan footprint. The building encloses a small garden to the east, and garden wall abutting the pavement. The west elevation retains the head of an original oriel window, with mortices for 4 mullions and 3 diamond saddle bars, a rare feature.

Set back from the road opposite the junction of Silver Street and High Street is the early nineteenth century United Reformed Church. Its southern main façade is constructed in gault brick with dentileaves course, and in red brick elsewhere, in Flemish bond with a slate roof. The church was built in two stages, beginning with the north part and extending to the south in 1822. The Church is two storeys, with two pairs of pedimented double doors, each with two panels, and overlights, with panelled jambs and lintels. Each side wall has four similar windows on each floor, with a straight joint between the two stages.

The Mausoleum approx. 20 metres east of United Reformed Church is early nineteenth century in origin, built in red brick in Flemish bond under a slate roof. It is a rectangular plan, facing west, and is of one storey in height. Inscribed stone panels represent the Legerton family, including Isaac Legerton, 1832, Susanna Mary Ann Ledgerton, 1856, and the other members of the same family, all of Shalford.

South of the Mausoleum is the Cottage approx. 30 metres north-north- west of Lysvean. This early nineteenth century cottage is timber framed, plastered and weatherboarded, and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. It consists of two bays facing south east, and is one storey with attic.

Further east are 'railings approx. 37 metres south-south-east of United Reformed Church'. This includes railings and two square piers of early nineteenth century. The railings are cast iron with fleur-de-lys finials, and the piers are hollow with an ornate scroll and foliage design; these were filled with concrete in twentieth century, and are topped with solid iron tented finials.

The listing entry for the Railings and gateway approx. 7 metres south of The Manse includes the nineteenth century cast iron railings and gateway. The railings are in six sections, stepped up gradient, and set on a low red brick base, with fleur-de-lys finials. The hollow square piers at East end and on each side of gate are elaborately designed with scrolls and foliage.

The Manse [Figure 25] is an impressive dwelling set behind the cast iron railings and an ornate garden, walled to the west. The house is late sixteenth century, altered in the early seventeenth, and is timber framed, rendered and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The south façade is of three bays, with a stack in middle bay against the front wall, and a seventeenth century bay extension to right. The building is two storeys and attic, the rear wing of one storey and attic. The south façade consists of three-window range of eighteenth century three-light windows, which have been restored. The two feature gables and central gabled dormer are prominent in the main facade, each with one eighteenth century two-light window. The building is symmetrical, apart from the front door which sits to the east of the centre bay with 6 fielded panels and a shallow hood on scrolled brackets.



Figure 25 The Manse



Figure 26 Brick House and Lysvean

To the north of the Green is Brick House and Lysvean [Figure 26]. This early nineteenth century dwelling was originally constructed as one house, and is now two separate dwellings. It is constructed in red brick in Flemish bond, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. Its main façade is well proportioned, with simple architectural details retained, with windows decorated with rendered flat arches and the western doorway adorned with a decorative fanlight. The main façade fronts south overlooking the Green.

St. George's House is Grade II* listed. It was constructed in the early sixteenth century, extended in the eighteenth century, and altered in nineteenth. The building is timber framed, rendered and partly of painted brick, with slate roof. It has a symmetrical principle southern façade, comprising a sashed front of c.1800 three windows wide. It has a small, paved front patio enclosed by iron railings and a gate with steps down to pavement level.

Further east is Trodd's Garage (John Pease Motors). This fifteenth century timber framed building extends east from St George's House, and is stepped up following the gradient of the High Street. The building is two storeys in height, rendered, roofed with slate.

Church Hill House, was formerly listed as Church View and Hill Cottage. The timber framed house was constructed in c.1500, later altered in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. In keeping with the High Street, it is rendered, and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The house is two storeys, with three twentieth century casements at first floor level and twentieth century bow window, six panel door and garage under tiled hipped canopy at ground floor level. The western façade contains the exposed red brick chimney stack. Under the bow window, a small garden plot is enclosed by a low brick wall, planted with an established wisteria and flowerbed.

The Hoods, constructed in the early sixteenth century and extended in the late seventeenth, is a timber framed, rendered dwelling with handmade red clay roof tiles. Its

south east elevation fronts onto the High Street, and comprises of a two-window range of twentieth century sashes of four lights. The twentieth century door is designed in late sixteenth century style, and fronts onto brick steps and iron handrails leading to the pavement level.

The Bakery and Burleigh Cottage were constructed in c.1580, and extended in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a two storey property, with two separate front entrances and well-proportioned windows. The bakery is set back slightly from the main cottage façade to the west, with the nineteenth century shopfront window under a slated canopy. The roof is red clay tiles, and the building timber framed and plastered.

The Dog Inn was constructed in the early nineteenth century in red brick, with stucco at the principle southern façade only, with a slate roof. It is two storeys, with early nineteenth century sash windows of a good proportion. The building was converted to residential use in the twenty-first century and is referred to as Chase House.

Following Dog Chase north [Figure 27], The Cottage is located to the west of the lane. The house is timber framed, rendered and with a red clay tile roof constructed c.1550. Its interest is derived from its simple frontage, which has retained its historic character. An abstract of title states that it was built by Richard Hitching on land formerly part of The Hoods, date not stated.

Further east, the Virginia House and The Stores is located on the other side of Dog Chase on High Street. The building was constructed in c.1570, and the site comprises of a house, set back from the pavement, and shop. These are timber framed, rendered and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The left bay of the main range forms The Stores; the remainder to the east is Virginia House. Virginia House is set back behind a small garden enclosed by a low red brick wall. Iron railings and piers are located atop the wall, with a

hedgerow behind. The house has bow windows at ground and first floor level, with the Stores consisting of large commercial windows to ground floor and a small sash window to the first floor.

Blenheim House, built in the late sixteenth century, is a timber framed, rendered dwelling, with some exposed imitation framing to the eastern façade, and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. It is one storey with attics, with leaded dormer windows and bow window at ground floor level.

Seventeenth century Briar Cottage is located north east of the High Street; the house is one storey house with attic dormers, constructed in timber frame and roughcast render, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The building is an unusual example of a small house of the first half of the seventeenth century, with high quality finish. It was originally symmetrical, but was extended by one bay to the east, with a bay window to the western end. The house is set back from the street, within a planted garden.

South of the High Street

Eighteenth century Smithy Cottage is set back from the High Street behind a low garden wall and front garden; it is a timber framed, rendered, dwelling, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The building is two storeys in height and of an L-shaped plan, orientated north-west.

1 and 2 Post Office Cottages consists of a row of early nineteenth century red brick cottages, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. These are prominent in the street scene, and are 3 storeys in height, with a well-proportioned frontage and simple plaster architectural details over the ground and first floor sash windows and semi-circular arches above the panelled doors.

Further west, Numbers 3 and 4, (Churchyard Cottage), Post Office Cottages are located. These are a pair of mid-nineteenth century attached cottages, built in red brick and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. The dwellings are a rectangular block plan form, orientated North West with a prominent central stack. The sash windows are symmetrical apart from the ground floor eastern window, which has been enlarged to form a shop window and subsequently converted to a twentieth century casement.



Figure 27 Dog Chase



Figure 28 High Street looking east



Figure 29 The Green and Church

South of the Green

The Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene is a prominent feature of the Green, despite being set back, due to the topography of the area. The church is mainly twelfth to early fifteenth century in origin, altered in eighteenth century and restored in nineteenth. It is constructed in flint and pebble rubble, with dressings of limestone and clunch, and roofed with handmade red clay tiles and lead.

Opposite the Green is Ivanhoe House; this house fronts onto the Green, its main façade to the North West. The house was constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and altered in the twentieth century. It is characteristic of the area, timber framed, rendered with some exposed framing and roofed with handmade clay tiles. The two bays facing onto the Green are early sixteenth century. The dwelling is two storeys with dormer attic, however appears prominent due to its position on high ground. The right half of the front elevation is jettied, with the jetty and framing above exposed. The Bressumer is carved with folded leaf design.

The Telephone Kiosk to north of Ivanhoe House is a K6 type telephone box designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935. The square kiosk is constructed in cast iron, with its recognisable domed roof.

To the west of the village green is the dwelling named The Green (listed as The House on the corner of The Green and Silver Street); the building is a late sixteenth century house, which was extended in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is timber framed, plastered and roofed with handmade red clay tiles. It is two-storeys high with attics. The original house comprised 4 bays facing onto the green, with an original wing behind the left end. Subsequent extensions on all sides have produced a complex building plan; it was in multiple occupation until c.1970. The house forms a substantial corner plot at the joining of High Street and Silver Street, set back from the street behind a low boundary wall.

Further south is Mill Chase House (listed as Rudi's Restaurant), a sixteenth century timber framed and rendered house under a slate roof. The building was altered in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The house is set back from the street, although due to later alterations is three storeys tall, making it prominent in the group of buildings on the west of the Green.

Other Buildings that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution to the Street Scene

The school forms the boundary to the north west of the conservation area, and makes a positive contribution to its character. Constructed in 1876, the Gothic Revival building is constructed in red brick under a slate roof, with decorative polychrome brickwork on its northern façade facing onto the street. Further east, and set back from the street, is the meeting room (former schoolroom). This building was constructed in 1876 in the Gothic Revival style, in red brick with stock brick and stone dressings. It is located within the complex of the United Reformed Church, the Chapel Cottage, the Manse and Mausoleum, therefore contributing to the significance of this grouping.

To the southern boundary of the character area are two cottages, elevated above street level behind a grassed verge, pavement and low brick wall boundary. The cottages are typical of the building stock in the historic core, constructed in timber frame, rendered and under a red clay tile roof. The northernmost cottage has an early eighteenth-century extension at the southern end and a modern addition at the back. This extension alters the original plan of the building, and modern window replacements also impact its historic character. The cottage to the south has retained more of its historic façade and features, however modern window replacements impact on its character.

A significant complex of buildings located in the south west of the area make a positive contribution to its character and our appreciation of its history. These buildings are the



Figure 30 Looking West over the Green



Figure 31 Ivanhoe House

Brewhouse, former Malthouse (now the Village Hall), the former brewery owner's house (now Hillfoot House), and the Brewery Tavern. This grouping is a rare example of a large rural village brewery complex, intact, and of historic and architectural value. The nineteenth century brewery buildings are now all under separate ownership and uses, however are still discernible as a heritage asset. A report in 2002 on Breweries in Essex, produced by Essex County Council, describes these buildings:

'The brewhouse is a three storey red brick building, under a pantiled roof with single storey out buildings and the boiler house chimney extant. There are two full length round headed windows on the ground floor of the west facade, otherwise window openings are much altered. It was converted to private residential use in 1952 and remains a private house. To the north of the brewhouse is the brewery malthouse, now the village hall. This too is of red brick, two storeys under a slate roof with a lucam on the road front facade (north east).

There has been some poor alteration to this structure - the kiln was demolished in the 1950s, a modern porch has been added to the ground floor under the lucam and some of the side extensions are in a poor state. 'Hillfoot House' to the south of the malthouse was the brewery owner's house. This is a magnificent double fronted house with a two storey bay either side of the front door. It is of rendered brick with white brick chimneys and a slate roof. The final component is the Brewery Tavern public house, built according to the plaque in 1879. It is of red brick with yellow brick dressings under a slate roof and also has much moulded tile decoration, such as on the gable ends, around some of the first floor windows and marking the top of the first floor. To the rear of the Brewery Tavern are the former stables, again of red and yellow brick, now under a corrugated roof.'

The Village Hall is situated in a particularly prominent location within the character area, overlooking the Green. It was gifted to the village for use as a community hall in 1920/21,



Figure 32 Graveyard of the United Reformed Church



and has undergone unfavourable alterations since, including the erection of a lean-to bus shelter in 1975. The building still makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and has potential for enhancement.

Further south, between Hillfoot House and the Brewery Tavern are a row of cottages, which adjoin the Tavern. Hillfoot Cottage is two storeys in height, rendered, with simple architectural detailing, timber windows and slate roofs. These details contribute to the historic character of the Cottage. The cottage adjoining this to the south, also two storeys in height, has intricate pargetting on its façade, and a bow window at ground level; however, plastic window replacements and concrete roof replacement has affected the architectural interest of the building.

Important Trees and Open Spaces

The Green forms a key central open space, with the surrounding high quality building stock and topography contributing to the visual appeal of the Green, and its prominence within village centre.

The established plain trees in the Green and the boundary trees of the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene make a positive contribution to the area, providing a verdant core to the village.

Detracting Elements

To the south of the area, some plastic window and roof replacements have impacted the historic character of the buildings; however, the architectural features are of a high quality throughout the majority of the area.

There are some areas of inconsistent approach to hard surfacing, where driveways, private roads and sections of pavement are in varying states of repair and of varied

material; along the road leading to the United Reformed Church and Dog's Chase in particular, may be enhanced through a consistent approach to material and maintenance of hard surfacing throughout the area.

Revised Boundary Changes

The Conservation Area has been extended to the north to include the churchyard for the United Reformed Church; this space is of historical and communal value to the village, and forms a clear relationship with the Church and Memorial buildings. Therefore, its inclusion enhances our appreciation of this group of heritage assets, and makes a positive contribution to the area. Further details of boundary changes are included in "2.4 Revisions to the Boundary" on page 12.

Character Area 2 Wethersfield Hall and Russell's Farm Area

This area comprises a small hamlet on the Braintree Road, adjacent to the Wethersfield Brook. It draws its significance from its historic rural character.

Streetscape and building materials

Development throughout this area is dispersed, consisting of farm houses and associated barns, isolated cottages, and Wethersfield Hall. Development is broken up by mature hedgerows, red brick walls associated with the Hall, and views out into the wider rural landscape.

The building stock consists predominantly of timber framed, rendered buildings under slate or red clay tile roofs, with some thatched cottages. Barns are typically black stained featheredge weatherboard. Materials are generally commensurate with the status and function of the building.

Boundary treatments

This area is characterised by extensive stretches of walls bordering the Braintree Road, from north to south. These comprise a high leaning red brick retaining wall along the Wethersfield Hall boundary, and then the high red brick wall associated with Russell's Farmyard. The farmhouse itself has a low brick wall with ornamental cast iron

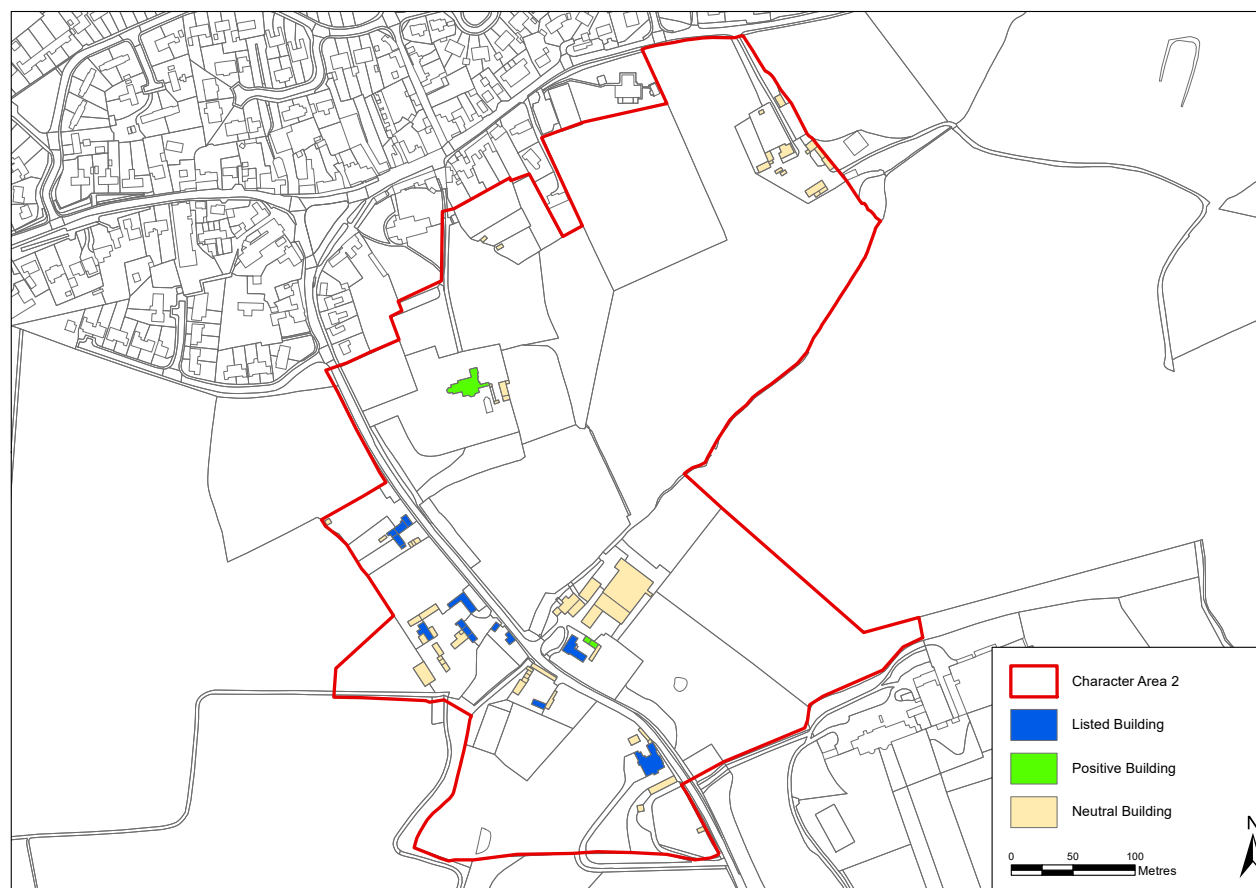


Figure 33 Character Area 2 Wethersfield Hall and Russell's Farm Area



Figure 34 Simm's Farmhouse, Braintree Road



Figure 35 Russell's Farmhouse, Braintree Road



Figure 36 Listed barn and ancillary building, Russell's farm, Braintree Road



Figure 37 Wethersfield Place, Braintree Road

railings in front of it. A new low brick wall follows the entrance to Brook's Farm, and a high red brick and buttressed wall along the former Wethersfield Place stableyard and gardens becomes a high redbrick garden wall with flint panels to the south of the main building. There is a low intermittent brick wall marking the Old Vicarage boundary with a wall of flint rubble with brick piers marking its former stableyard.

The other boundaries comprise hedges and chainlink fences. Those along the boundary with Wethersfield Manor are high and well-maintained. On the opposite side of the road the hedge is lower, enabling views out into open countryside and into the gardens of Wethersfield Place. Opposite Wethersfield Place, the boundary comprises chain link fence with a mix of hedge and mature trees, allowing views into the former parkland and up to the planting around Wethersfield Manor. The garden boundary of Brook Farmhouse is a cast-iron fence with well-maintained hedge, low enough to afford good views of the historic property. The boundary to the north of this comprises a chain-link fence and there has very recently been earth removal parallel to it, impacting on a possible historic lynchet or former roadside bank. There are views into the wider countryside from here. This is succeeded by hedges and then the brick wall associated with Wethersfield Hall and the main entry into the historic core of the village.

The overall effect is one of increased enclosure and settlement, as the observer moves from the southern edge of the Character Area into the historic core.

Views

This area is characterised by a mix of enclosure due to the high walls and hedges bounding the Braintree Road (see above), where the views are largely drawn along the road and the properties fronting onto it. At places along Braintree Road are wider views out across hedges or fences, both into the wider rural setting of the Conservation Area and into the gardens of the larger properties.



Figure 38 Brook Farmhouse, Braintree Road



Figure 39 Wethersfield Manor, looking east



Figure 40 North elevation of the Hall 1984 (ECC)



Figure 41 South elevation of the Hall (Wethersfield Local History Group)

Individual Listed Buildings

There are eleven Listed Buildings within the Character Area. Full listing descriptions are included in the Appendix.

The northernmost building is the Grade II* listed, Numbers 1-4 Simm's Farmhouse [Figure 34]. This comprises a sixteenth century timber-framed and rendered house, with a prominent panel of late seventeenth century pargetting in high relief, of conventional foliage and scrolls on the road frontage. It abuts Number 1 Simm's Cottage, a Grade II seventeenth-century or earlier timber framed and rendered house.

To the south is Russell's Farm. Russell's Farmhouse is a two-storeyed sixteenth century timber framed house. It forms part of a group of Grade II listed buildings that formed the principle structures within the historic farmyard; they include an eighteenth century stable block, an early seventeenth century barn, a late seventeenth century barn and an early sixteenth century ancillary building [Figure 36], possibly a granary. This structure is a building of high quality and unusual type. The farmyard buildings are all in various stages of disrepair.

To the immediate south of this group is the late seventeenth century timber-framed Brookside Cottage. This one storey cottage is timber framed, rendered with decorative pargetting, under a thatched roof. It retains its original boarded and ledged door with one small light.

To the south of this is Wethersfield Place (Six Apples) a large eighteenth-century house [Figure 37]. The main range is of red brick, it faces south-west into its own gardens, which are screened by a high brick and flint wall. The rear wings are timber framed and rendered, and visible from the road. Stables Cottage is seventeenth century in date, with eighteenth century extensions. It was presumably incorporated into the stable yard for

Wethersfield Place when it was built. The stable yard is largely screened from the road by a high brick wall.

On the opposite side of the road is Brook Farmhouse [Figure 38]. The hall house (c.1400) now forms the service wing behind a late seventeenth century range, which was remodelled in the eighteenth century with the addition of a four-bay sashed front. There are a number of historic farmyard buildings, including a former maltings associated with Brooks Farm, as well as extensive new barns. It is still an active agricultural enterprise.

Other Buildings that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution to the Street Scene

Wethersfield Hall is a rendered and tiled building of probable mid-late nineteenth century date [Figure 39]. It replaced a seventeenth century predecessor, of which only the cellar survives underneath the existing structure. Its location is shown on the 1777 Chapman and Andre map as occupying roughly the same footprint as the modern hall and it is likely that the earlier hall was on the same site. The 1875 first edition OS map shows it had formal gardens to the south and west, and much of this area is still garden. It is linked to the High Street by a long driveway which is accessed via a pair of ornamental wrought iron gates

The Hall's walls make a positive contribution to the character of this area; high, red brick walls flank Braintree Road on the approach to the Hall and Village from the South. This creates a sense of enclosure and grandeur, indicating the presence of the manor site and forming its wider setting.

The Old Vicarage [Figure 42] is located at the southern end of the character area. This early-mid nineteenth century house is of red brick with sash windows and a central door. It is not shown on the 1777 map, when the Parsonage was located at what is now



Figure 42 The Old Vicarage, Braintree Road



Figure 43 The Old Vicarage outbuildings (Parkside to the right)



Figure 44 View towards the centre of Wethersfield

Parsonage Farm, but is depicted on the 1875 first edition OS map. Elements of the original formal gardens survive, including some of the tree planting. To the north are two former outbuildings (Parkside and an un-named shed, Figure 43), which appear to have been part of the associated stable-yard. They are of red brick with tiled roofs.

Behind Brook's Farmhouse was a small seventeenth century building, part brick and part timber framed. This originated as a maltings, part of the kiln of which survives before being converted to a brew house.

Important Trees and Open Spaces

The open fields and historic manorial grounds form important open spaces within this area; they contribute to our understanding of the historic context of the village and its rural character. These fields and open grassland areas are visible from places along Braintree Road, providing fortuitous views of the village's arable farmland and manorial pastures.

The hedgerows which flank Braintree Road also make a positive contribution to the character of the area, complementing the high red brick walls and creating the sense of enclosure. Some trees have been retained within the grounds of Wethersfield Hall to the west of the Hall, and within the Old Vicarage's grounds.

Detracting elements

The majority of this character area is of high quality, and has retained its rural character. Some elements of the Russell's Farm complex, however, detract from the character, due to their varying state of repairs. As these farm buildings are visible from Braintree Road, their disrepair impacts the appreciation of the area and the southern approach to the village.

Revised boundary changes

The Conservation Area has been made smaller to exclude the playing fields which have no historic or architectural interest; the value of this open space is drawn from the contribution it makes to the Conservation Area's significance by forming an important part of its setting, enhancing the way in which it is experienced, understood and appreciated. Further details of boundary changes are included in Section 2.4.

Character Area 3 Manor House Area

This area comprises of Wethersfield Manor, its associated buildings, and its existing formal gardens to the south, along with dwellings on the southern periphery of the village. Its character is derived from its use as a historic landscape park and gardens, with principal house to the north of the area and associated buildings to the east and south. The area also includes buildings on the Braintree Road down to the junction with Gosfield Road. These dwellings include cottages thought to have been occupied by agricultural workers who would have worked on nearby hop poles and plantations, associated with Goldens Farm.

Streetscape and Building Materials

The only public route within this character area is Braintree Road, located to the western boundary of the Manor House. The streetscape here comprises of tall hedgerows and established boundary planting, creating a sense of enclosure to the west of the area, with low red brick semi-circular entrance marking the approach to the Manor House.

The buildings within this area include a variety of materials, and differ in colour palette to the other character areas. The Manor House is a rendered building, with parapet

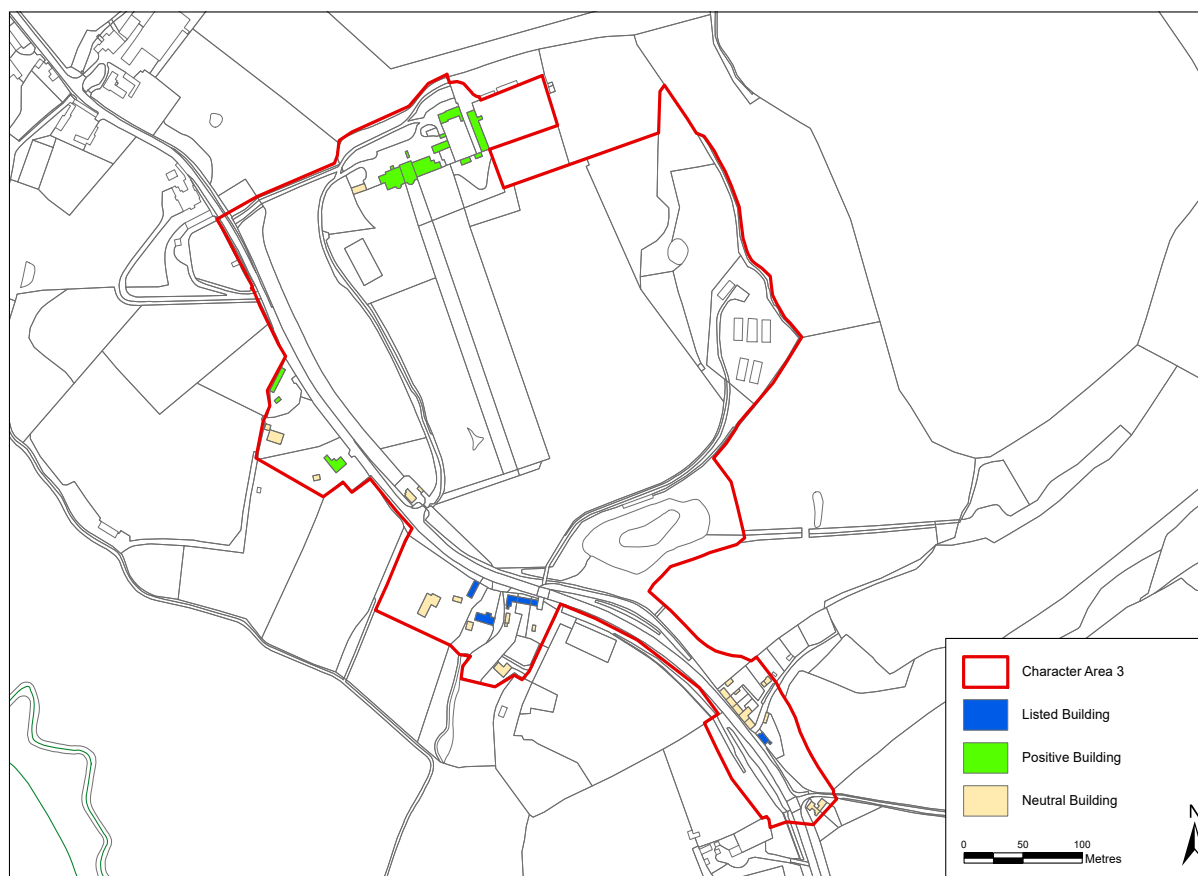


Figure 45 Character Area 3 Manor House

and simple, classical ornamental urns enlivening the roofscape. Pediments and a porch supported by classical columns mark the main entrances to the house. Low red brick walls enclose the planting on the front driveway.

The South Lodge is one storey with attic and dormers, plastered, and under a red clay tile roof. The plaster is painted in a pastel pink.

Boundary treatments

The grounds of the Manor House are fairly open in character, with wide reaching views into the surrounding landscape and across the valley to the north of the house. Within the immediate setting of the house, however, high brick walls enclose areas of planting and separate the main façade to provide separate driveways. These walls have an impact on our appreciation of the historic building, as they break up the façade to accommodate its modern residential use. The Manor House would be better understood as a single entity, without boundary walls here.

Views

Key views within this area are drawn predominantly from the north, over the valley and towards the village. The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene is visible from the Manor House, and views across the southern edge of the village and arable fields. There are also designed views within the grounds of the House, with the formal gardens visible to the south.

Other Buildings That Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution to The Street Scene

The buildings within this area are unlisted, but are of considerable local value. These include: The Manor House, Clock House, The Coach House, Carol Cottage, East Wing, Fortesque, West Wing, and South Lodge.



Figure 47 South elevation of Manor House [nd] (ECC)



Figure 46 Separate driveways at Manor House [nd]



Figure 49 Wethersfield Manor House Ref <https://greatwarhomehospitals.wordpress.com/home/wethersfield-wethersfield-auxiliary-hospital-essex/>



Figure 48 South Lodge

The Manor House is a significant building within the character and Conservation Area. It consists of an early nineteenth century high status building, displaying a number of Georgian features, and with a post-war west wing. The Manor House is thought to have originally incorporated the earlier timber framed Dobbins Farmhouse as its western wing, as shown on the 1724 'Plan of the Alexandra Palace and Park' by Bland, Joseph, Parker, Samuel, Smyth, Payler and Warburton, John. A major fire originated in this earlier part of the house in 1933, and while the western wing was rebuilt it is not known how much of the original fabric was retained.

The House makes a positive contribution to the character area; it is prominent in the landscape, located on the highest point, allowing inter-visibility between the heritage asset and the wider Conservation Area. It is of local significance to the area, and architectural interest for its distinctive features.

Important Trees and Open Spaces

The majority of the area is undeveloped and consists of the manorial grounds, formal gardens and former parkland, with wide reaching views to the north and east creating an open character.

The southern boundary of the Conservation Area is densely planted, forming part of the Wethersfield Eco Project, with tree boundary following Braintree Road and within the immediate setting of the Manor House. Formal planting in the immediate setting of the Manor include designed swathes of mature trees and good individual specimens including cedars, chestnuts and oaks along the approach.

Detracting Elements

The Manor site remains relatively intact though gradual erosion of character is evident through small changes such as boundary treatments, parked vehicles, outbuildings and inconsistent landscaping.



Revised Boundary Changes

The exclusion of the old park boundary of the Manor House is considered to be necessary, due to the existing character and land use of the former park. While the Manor House has retained its formal gardens to the south, the wider landscape has been put back to arable use, and is no longer discernible as parkland. Therefore, while it is not worthy of inclusion within the Conservation Area, it is important as the setting to the Manor House and Conservation Area. The area has been extended to include the walled garden, an existing historic garden feature which makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. Further details of boundary changes are included in Section 2.4.

3.3 The Setting of Wethersfield Conservation Area

The Setting of Heritage Assets

The important contribution that setting makes to the significance of heritage assets is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021), as well as in other guidance. Decision makers are obliged to have special regard to the desirability of preserving not only designated heritage assets, such as listed buildings and conservation areas, but also their settings.

The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF Glossary as ‘the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral’ (NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary).

Historic England provide detailed guidance on the setting of heritage assets, stating that all heritage assets have a setting, whether they are designated or not, irrespective of the form in which they survive. In the analysis of setting, the important contribution of views to the significance of heritage assets and the ability to appreciate that significance is often a primary consideration. Yet the contribution a setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset, such as the Wethersfield Conservation Area, is not limited to views alone. Setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses. The detrimental alteration of the character of a setting may reduce our ability to understand the historic relationship between places. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access, view or experience that setting. Therefore, any application for development within the setting of a heritage asset is subject to constraints.

The NPPF states that for any development within the setting of a heritage asset, a thorough assessment of the impact on the setting is required. This should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it (NPPF, paragraph 194).

In addition, paragraph 206 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets (including the setting of conservation areas), to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably. Therefore, the favourable treatment of proposals that retain the open, pastoral character of Wethersfield Conservation Area’s setting is obligatory by the local authority, while proposals that fail to retain this character would be rejected.

When assessing an application for development which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities should also consider the implications of cumulative change and incremental harm. New developments and changes can not only detract from a heritage asset’s significance in the short-term but may also damage its significance and economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its on-going conservation.

The Setting of Wethersfield Conservation Area

Along with its high-quality buildings of historic and architectural merit, the Wethersfield Conservation Area derives significance from its historic settlement pattern. The agrarian landscape that historically surrounded the settlement of Wethersfield has played a vital part in the evolution of this settlement pattern, the village’s development

and the economic function of the community for many centuries. The quality of the surrounding rural landscape therefore makes an important contribution to the historic setting and significance of the Wethersfield Conservation Area.

There are many vantage points within the Conservation Area, where the open pastoral landscape of its setting can be viewed and experienced. The historic and rustic character of this setting is highly tangible and the increased appreciation it affords of the Conservation Area's significance, along with that of individual listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets is clear. The surrounding open landscape and fields have a direct historical and functional association with Wethersfield village and the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area's setting's surviving agrarian character, empty of modern development, greatly enhances its significance.

Revisions to the boundary of the Conservation Area have been undertaken as a part of this appraisal in order to ensure those areas designated fulfill the necessary criteria for designation. As a result, some open areas and fields on the edge of the village have been excluded. The National Planning Policy Framework states in paragraph 186 that 'when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.' Where open fields and landscape features have a definite special historic interest, such as the former estate lands of Wethersfield Manor, with formal gardens and a landscaped park, these have been retained within the boundary, in order to preserve their significance.

Areas that are currently and historically empty of development, are lacking in this specific special architectural or historic interest. They may have had agricultural uses



Figure 50 The view northeast towards the Conservation Area from the public right of way (PROW 117_10). The scaffolded spire of St Mary Magdalene can be seen, while the listed Simms farmstead can be seen in the foreground.



Figure 51 The view southeast across the setting of the Conservation Area towards the listed Russell's Farmstead. Brook Farm is beyond, with Wethersfield Hall and estate on the hill behind.

in the past and uses that have historically support the community of Wethersfield, as has much of the surrounding landscape, but due to their lack of significance in their own right, their inclusion within the boundary of the Conservation Area is open to a potential challenge. For example, it would not be possible to demonstrate that they have the necessary special architectural or historic interest worthy of conservation area protection and therefore they would be more vulnerable to development, were they to remain within the boundary.

However, as part of the setting for the Conservation Area, the open and agrarian character of the surrounding fields and meadows contributes to and permits an appreciation of the Conservation Area's significance and this contribution is considered worthy of preservation under the NPPF and national guidance. In paragraph 200 of the NPPF it states that 'local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas... and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably'. Any development within the recently excluded open areas around Wethersfield, now the setting of the Conservation Area, would need to preserve the contribution the setting makes to the significance of the Wethersfield Conservation Area or the ability to appreciate that significance.

The open agrarian character of the setting to the west of the Braintree Road is particularly important. The public right of way in this area (PROW 117_10) allows good views across the landscape towards the Conservation Area and some of its listed buildings and the significance of the heritage assets, as part of a rural settlement surrounded by a largely agrarian landscape, can be appreciated.



To the south east of the Conservation Area, its setting is characterised open pastures and paddocks. The areas to the south of Wethersfield Place, and around the Vicarage, Goldens Farm and Sand Hill retain their open, undeveloped pastoral character and form the historic agrarian setting for the Conservation Area. Two public footpaths traverse this area (PROW 117_11 and PROW 117_38), which allow views of the Conservation Area within its setting to be appreciated.

The agricultural character of the setting to the east and to the north of the Conservation Area is also evident, with many fields in these areas being under cultivation. The Conservation Area's setting and significance can be appreciated in views from two further public footpaths (PROW 117_3 to the east and PROW 117_33 to the north).

4. Opportunities for Enhancement

4.1 Car Parking

Car parking is an inevitable concern within any historic village settlement, and the same is true of Wethersfield Conservation Area. The High Street is wide enough to accommodate on-street parking; however on-street parking surrounding the village Green narrows the roads down to single-lane traffic.

4.2 Loss of Architectural Details

As highlighted within the appraisal, numerous buildings within Wethersfield have been subjected to unsympathetic alterations which has resulted in the gradual, and in some cases irrevocable, loss of architectural detailing which would contribute positively to the village's distinctive character. Two key examples of this is the loss of original timber windows and doors and replacement with modern windows which do not replicate the high quality detailing of those they are replacing.

The Village Hall is situated in a particularly prominent location within the character area, overlooking the Green. It was gifted to the village for use as a community hall in 1920/21, but has undergone intrusive alterations since, including the erection of a lean-to bus shelter in 1975. The building still makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and has potential for enhancement through the removal of the bus station to better reveal the original façade, including the window behind.

4.3 Boundary Walls

Boundary walls contribute significantly to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, assisting in defining the streetscape and in many areas creating a sense of enclosure. Throughout the Conservation Area there are examples of walls



Figure 52 Car parking on the village green

which are in need of repair to avoid continued deterioration, which can accelerate significantly where mortar has been washed out, bricks have spalled, vegetation is unchecked or areas have been repointed in cementitious mortar mixes.

4.4 Colour Palette

The Conservation Area is currently characterised by its red brick and light painted render. Future alterations should respond to the existing and historic palette to preserve the local distinctiveness; however, it should also reflect the age, status and architectural style of its host building. The introduction of an inappropriate modern colour palette into the street scene is considered to be a concern within the Conservation Area, and if left unchecked will have a cumulative and significant impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is also imperative that appropriate paints are used to ensure that the passage of moisture through historic properties fabric is not inhibited which can cause decay.

4.5 Access and Integration

Wethersfield is a relatively compact village and there are few issues regarding access and integration. There is scope for enhancement in terms of wayfinding within the village, to signpost key features such as the Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene, the United Reformed Church and wider public rights of way to enhance the link between the village and its surrounding countryside.

It is considered that the continued maintenance of the red brick walls on Braintree Road is supported, in order to preserve the character of the Conservation Area and approach to the village from the south, which currently enhances the access to and across the Conservation Area.

4.6 Inappropriate Modern Development

There has only been small-scale modern development within the Conservation Area and most of this is located to the rear of older properties. These developments have been largely designed in accordance with Essex Design Guideline principles and can be considered as neutral in their impact on the Conservation Area.

Care needs to be taken within the Conservation Area that windows, doors, roofs and other architectural elements are not replaced with those of inappropriate design and materials. The character of the Conservation Area is defined by the historic palette of materials used and this piecemeal loss of fabric can cumulatively have a more significant impact on the character and appearance than any of the other concerns.

The impact of modern development on the outskirts of the village or the Conservation Area will need to be controlled or appropriately mitigated so that it does not impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, or on its wider views, and the contribution these make to its significance.

4.7 Neutral Contributors

A number of buildings are currently considered to make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The buildings that fall into this category still contribute to the area's character and appearance, and their contribution should not be underestimated and certainly should not be considered negative. Small scale improvement works, such as reinstating boundary treatments, planting, appropriate replacement windows and roofs, use of colour and preventing loss of architectural form and features would enhance these buildings. Similar interventions to the more modern neutral buildings could help to further sympathetically integrate them into the area. Care needs to be taken through the planning process to ensure

that neutral buildings do not become negative through inappropriate alterations and additions. Neutral contributors are identified on Figure 19.

4.8 Public Realm

Hard Landscaping

It is considered that there are some areas of inconsistency in the approach to hard surfacing, where driveways, private roads and sections of pavement are in varying states of repair and of varied material. Along the road leading to the United Reformed Church and Dog's Chase in particular, are areas that may be enhanced through a consistent approach to material and maintenance of hard surfacing.

Open Spaces

The open and green spaces across the Conservation Area make a positive contribution and are integral to its character in many instances. Appropriate levels of maintenance needs should be considered to these spaces and where appropriate, opportunities for enhancement sought.

Trees and Planting

Appropriate levels of maintenance needs to be ensured and where appropriate, opportunities for enhancement sought.



Figure 53 Hard Landscaping outside the United Reformed Church

5.0 Management Proposals

5.1 Positive Management Short Term

These proposals relate to positive management and focus on good practice and improved ways of working within the local planning authority. These are generally low cost and can be implemented within a short time-frame, typically within one or two years.

Local Heritage List

Wethersfield would benefit from the local planning authority adopting and maintaining a comprehensive Local List in order to preserve its historic environment from further deterioration. A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. A Local List may be beneficial to ensure the upkeep of buildings which are significant to the history and character of Wethersfield. The exercise would also facilitate a greater understanding of the area and could be utilised as a public engagement strategy to improve awareness and understanding. There are a number of buildings within the conservation area which are of sufficient quality to be considered for local list status, as highlighted in Section 2.6.

Enforcement

Where the necessary permission has not been sought for alterations, such as advertising signage and building alterations which are not contained within the General Permitted Development Order, the Local Planning Authority's powers of enforcement should be considered. This could assist in reinstating any lost character or architectural features whose loss may have a negative cumulative effect on the conservation area, as well as avoiding a precedence being set for similar, uncharacteristic works.

General Maintenance: Public Realm and Highways

Through the agreement of a standard good practice within the conservation area between relevant Local Authority teams and other landowners, long term goals can be set to promote good design within the public realm, such as avoiding excessive road markings or signage and agreeing a standard street furniture to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced. This will have a long term positive impact on the conservation area.

A positive working interdepartmental relationship is key to improving the public realm and highways.

Planning and Highways should work together to agree standard good practice within a conservation area such as avoiding excessive road markings and where necessary using narrow road markings.

Planning and Highways should work together to agree standard street furniture to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced.

Heritage Statements

In accordance with the NPPF (Para.194), applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

All applications within the conservation area and setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement. Any application without a Heritage Statement should not be validated.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, tree's or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the conservation area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017). Applications which fail to have assessed impact upon views, setting and significance should not be validated.

Tree Management

In line with Braintree District Council's policy, all trees in conservation areas which have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm, at a height of 1.5m from the ground, are subject to protection. They may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks written notice has been given to the Council. If the Council objects to the work a TPO may be served. It is also considered that any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the conservation area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

New Development

To be successful, any future development needs to be mindful of the local character of the conservation area, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability. Historic England and CABI guidelines are:-

Successful new development will:

- Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land;
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and

- around it (including public footpaths);
- Respect important views;
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings;
- Use materials and building methods which as high in quality of those used in existing buildings; and
- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.

Braintree District Council should guide development in a positive manner by:

- Engaging with developers at an early stage through the Pre-Application Process to ensure modern development is high quality in design, detail and materials;
- Ensuring medium-large scale development schemes are referred to a Design Review (or similar) to ensure that new buildings, additions and alterations are designed to be in sympathy with the established character of the area. The choice of materials and the detailed design of building features are important in making sure proposals are appropriate to a conservation area; and
- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

Neutral Elements

The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

Braintree Council must not allow for the quality of design to be 'averaged down' by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment. The Local Planning Authority must where possible seek schemes which enhance the built environment and not allow previous poor quality schemes to become precedents.

Tall Buildings

Any development within the conservation area, and its setting, must take into account existing built development, key views, rural character and significance, to ensure that the height of new buildings does not impact the area negatively.

Public Facing Resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the conservation area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area. In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their property in an appropriate manner. A single Good Practice Design Guide on standard alterations such as signage, shop-fronts, windows, doors, rainwater goods, boundaries and roof extensions will ensure inappropriate development does not continue to be the accepted norm.

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Wethersfield's built heritage.

Improved Understanding and Awareness

At present there is no interpretation (information boards, signage, interactive QR Codes) within the conservation area aimed at improving understanding and appreciation of its significance. This would be an effective way to improve the awareness and enhance the identity of Wethersfield as a historic settlement.

Further research into the significance of the Manor House complex and the Brewery

would enhance understanding and appreciation of the unique history of Wethersfield, and would work to better integrate associated buildings.

Design Guidance on Historic Paint Colours and Types

Braintree District Council should consider adopting a design approach to defining appropriate colours, tones and materials within the area, to ensure that the distinctive local character is retained throughout.

5.2 Positive Management: Longer Term

These proposals are focussed around long term positive management.

Boundary

The conservation area boundary has been considered within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2021) and Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019).

The conservation area should be reviewed every five years to monitor change and inform management proposals. The boundary should be assessed as part of this review to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The conservation area should be reviewed periodically to monitor change and inform management proposals. Identifying concerns and management within the area should be the main focus when reviewing the conservation area.

Interpretation

It is considered that further research into the brewery complex, and the integrated interpretation of the existing buildings, would benefit appreciation of this grouping of

heritage assets. The 2002 Essex County Council Report on Breweries in Essex notes that:

*'All are in current use as private houses, a public house and village hall and as such are generally well maintained. Should the opportunity arise all structures should be individually recorded and all mapped in relation to each other and any other former structures. Particular attention should be paid to the malthouse. This was not assessed as part of the earlier Essex County Council surveys of malthouses and hence needs to be assessed in relation to those already surveyed (and others elsewhere in this report which were not previously assessed). It is probably the most vulnerable of the extant structures as it is in the worst condition and may be subject to proposals for other uses. It is also recommended that there is no in-filling of the open space between these four structures as this would detract from the integrity of the total former brewery site.'*¹

5.3 Council-Led Projects

Opportunity Sites

The first opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area is through investment to improve the wider public realm. This can be achieved through continuing to improve hard surfacing, and maintaining areas of open space.

There is also opportunity for improvement to the south of the conservation area, including some elements of the Russell's Farm complex. Due to their varying state of repairs, and visibility from Braintree Road, the disrepair of some farm buildings here impacts the appreciation of the area and the southern approach to the village.

¹ Essex County Council, Breweries in Essex, op. cit.

5.4 Funding Opportunities

There are four main funding opportunities which would assist in the execution of these plans:

Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund is the single largest dedicated funder of heritage in the UK and therefore is the most obvious potential source of funding. Funding is often targeted at schemes which preserve, enhance and better reveal the special interest of the area whilst also improving public awareness and understanding. Grant opportunities and requirements change overtime, for up-to-date information on HLF schemes Braintree Council should consult their appointed Heritage Specialist.

Heritage Action Zones (Historic England)

Heritage Action Zones are intended to help unlock the economic potential of an area through investing in heritage, making them more attractive to resident, businesses, tourists and investors.

Section 106 Agreements

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon Wethersfield. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site specific improvements.

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon Wethersfield. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site specific improvements.

6. Appendices

6.1 Bibliography

Publications

Crosby, T (Essex County Council)	2002	<i>Essex Breweries: comparative survey of modern / industrial sites and monuments No. 16</i>
Historic England	2017	<i>The Setting of Heritage Assets</i>
Historic England	2019	<i>Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Second Edition)</i>
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	2021	<i>National Planning and Policy Framework</i>
Morant, P.	1763-8	<i>The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex, Vol II, Reprint 1978, EP Publishing Ltd. with Essex County Library, 370-373</i>
Rumble, A.	1983	<i>Domesday Book, Phillimore, Chichester</i>

Archives

- Essex Record Office
- Francis Frith Collection
- Braintree Museum

6.2 List of all Designated Heritage Assets within the Conservation Area

LIST ENTRY NO.	NAME	GRADE	BUILDING TYPE
1337860	PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE	I	PARISH CHURCH
1123356	SIMMS FARMHOUSE	II*	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1337878	ST GEORGE'S HOUSE	II*	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123329	THE COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123334	CHAPEL COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123335	RAILINGS APPROXIMATELY 37 METRES SOUTH SOUTH EAST OF UNITED REFORMED CHURCH	II	RAILINGS; GATE PIER
1123336	RAILINGS AND GATEWAY APPROXIMATELY 7 METRES SOUTH OF THE MANSE	II	RAILINGS; GATE

LIST ENTRY NO.	NAME	GRADE	BUILDING TYPE
1123337	RUDI'S RESTAURANT	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123338	TRODD'S GARAGE (JOHN PEASE MOTORS)	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE; HALL HOUSE
1123339	THE HOODS	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123340	BLENHEIM HOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123357	ANCILLARY BUILDING APPROXIMATELY 6 METRES SOUTH OF RUSSELL'S FARMHOUSE	II	GRANARY?; TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING
1123358	STABLES COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123359	WETHERSFIELD PLACE (SIX APPLES)	II	HOUSE
1123360	BROOK COTTAGES	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1123361	BROOK FARMHOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE

LIST ENTRY NO.	NAME	GRADE	BUILDING TYPE
1123299	3 AND 4 (CHURCHYARD COTTAGE AND POST OFFICE COTTAGES) HIGH STREET	II	HOUSE
1168248	BARN APPROXIMATELY 8 METRES SOUTH OF RUSSELL'S FARMHOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED BARN
1168278	GOLDEN'S FARMHOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1168308	FIR COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1168521	CASTLE HOUSE (THE SPINNING WHEEL)	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1168561	THE MANSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1168614	HOUSE ON THE CORNER OF THE GREEN AND SILVER STREET	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1168649	THE BAKERY AND BURLEIGH COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE; SHOP
1168634	CHURCH HILL HOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE

LIST ENTRY NO.	NAME	GRADE	BUILDING TYPE
1168689	VIRGINIA HOUSE AND THE STORES	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE; SHOP
1168699	BRIAR COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1168712	1 AND 2 HIGH STREET (SPARROWS) POST OFFICE COTTAGES	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1306920	IVANHOE HOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1306940	MAUSOLEUM APPROXIMATELY 20 METRES EAST OF UNITED REFORMED CHURCH	II	MAUSOLEUM
1306955	BRICK HOUSE AND LYSVEAN	II	HOUSE
1307078	BROOKSIDE COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1307092	EDGEBROOK AND ROSAMOND	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1307106	SIMS COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE



LIST ENTRY NO.	NAME	GRADE	BUILDING TYPE
1307111	STABLE BLOCK APPROXIMATELY 9 METRES SOUTH EAST OF RUSSELL'S FARMHOUSE	II	STABLE
1329385	K6 TELEPHONE KIOSK TO NORTH OF IVANHOE HOUSE [WETHERSFIELD]	II	TELEPHONE BOX
1337840	THE DOG INN	II	INN
1337841	SMITHY COTTAGE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1337864	THE GABLES	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1337848	RUSSELL'S FARMHOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE
1337849	BARN APPROXIMATELY 12 METRES SOUTH WEST OF RUSSELL'S FARMHOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED BARN
1337850	BARN APPROXIMATELY 15 METRES SOUTH EAST OF GOLDEN'S FARMHOUSE	II	TIMBER FRAMED BARN

LIST ENTRY NO.	NAME	GRADE	BUILDING TYPE
1337876	UNITED REFORMED CHURCH [WETHERSFIELD]	II	CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL
1337877	COTTAGE APPROXIMATELY 30 METRES NORTH WEST OF LYSVEAN	II	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE

6.3 Relevant Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (2021)	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2019)	ID: 18a
National Guidance	English Heritage (2019) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance	
Local Supplementary Planning Document	Braintree District Council Local Plan; Policy LPP 47 Built and Historic Environment	

6.4 Glossary (National Planning Policy Framework)

Term	Description
Archaeological interest	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
Conservation (for heritage policy)	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
Designated heritage asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic environment record	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
Setting of a heritage asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

6.5 Frequently Asked Questions

What is a conservation area?

Conservation areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority as areas of special architectural and historic interest. There are many different types of conservation area, which vary in size and character, and range from historic town centres to country houses set in historic parks. Conservation area designation introduces additional planning controls and considerations, which exist to protect an area's special character and appearance and the features that make it unique and distinctive. Although designation introduces controls over the way that owners can develop their properties, it is generally considered that these controls are beneficial as they sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework regards conservation areas as 'designated heritage assets'.

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act specifies the general duty of Local Authorities, in the exercise of planning functions (Section 72). The 1990 Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

How are conservation areas designated and managed?

The designation process includes detailed analysis of the proposed conservation area and adoption by the local planning authority. A review process should be periodically undertaken and the Conservation Area assessed to safeguard that it retains special architectural or historic interest. Threats can be identified, and the boundary reviewed, to ensure it is still relevant and appropriate.

This Conservation Area is supported by an appraisal and management plan. The appraisal describes the importance of an area in terms of its character, architecture, history, development form and landscaping. The management plan, included within the appraisal, sets out various positive proposals to improve, enhance and protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

What are the Council's duties regarding development in conservation areas?

The Local Authority must follow the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These set out in clear terms how development proposals within Conservation Areas should be considered on the basis of whether they preserve and enhance the character

and appearance of the area. Applications which fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area are likely to be refused as a result. An authority's Local Plan also typically includes a specific policy on Conservation Areas.

How can I find out if I live in a conservation area?

Boundary maps of conservation areas can be found on your Local Planning Authority website. Some authorities have an online interactive map search allowing you to search for a property. You can also contact your local planning authority directly to find out if you reside within a conservation area. Braintree District Council has an interactive Conservation Areas map which can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/planning-building-control/conservation-areas>.

Do I need permission to alter a property in a conservation area?

Many conservation areas have an Article 4 Direction which covers the painting, rendering or cladding of external walls. Alterations or extensions to buildings in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. Your Local Authority will provide advice as to how to proceed.



Do I need to make an application for routine maintenance work?

If routine works of maintenance are to be carried out using authentic materials and traditional craft techniques, on a like-for-like basis, you are not likely to need to apply for permission. The use of a contractor with the necessary skills and experience of working on historic buildings is essential. Inappropriate maintenance works and the use of the wrong materials will cause damage to the fabric of a historic building. It is recommended you contact the local planning authority for clarification before commencing any works.

Will I need to apply for permission for a new or replacement garage, fence, boundary wall or garden structure?

Any demolition, development or construction in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. A replacement boundary, garage, cartlodge or greenhouse will need to be designed with the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area in mind. Your Local Authority will provide advice as to how to proceed with an application.

Can I demolish a building in a conservation area?

Demolition or substantial demolition of a building within a conservation area will usually require permission from the local planning authority.

What is an Article 4 Direction?

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, certain minor works, such as domestic alterations, can normally be carried out without planning permission. However, some conservation areas are covered by an Article 4 Direction, which brings certain types of development back under the control of a local planning authority. This allows potentially harmful proposals to be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications. Article 4 Directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area and a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted. Historic England provides information on Article 4 Directions on their website.

Can I remove a tree within a conservation area?

If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work, the local planning authority must be notified 6 weeks before any work begins. This enables

the authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and, if necessary, create a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it. Consent will be required for any works to trees that are protected. Further information on TPOs can be found on Historic England's website.

How do I find out more about a conservation area?

Historic England's website has information on conservation areas and their designation. Further information on the value of conservation areas and what it means to live in a conservation area can also be accessed via their website.

Historic England has also published an advice note called Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management which sets out advice on the appraisal of conservation areas and managing change in conservation areas.

In addition, local planning authorities have information on the conservation areas within their boundaries available on their websites. They will have information pertaining to when the conservation area was designated, how far it extends and the reason for its designation.

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