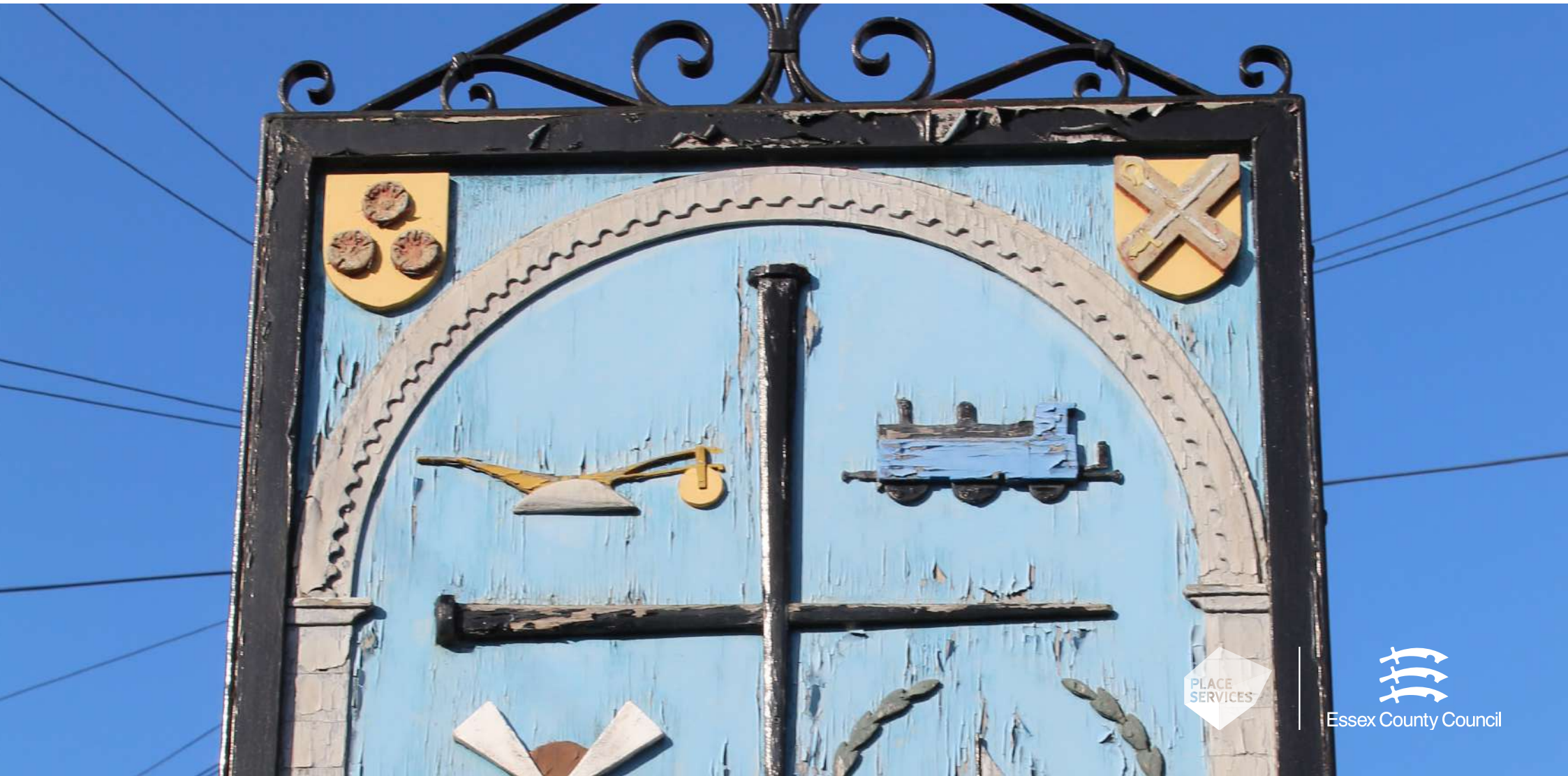
Thorpe-Le-Soken Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Client:
Tendring District Council

Date:
November 2023



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Contents

1. Introduction 4
- 1.1 Summary 4
- 1.2 Conserving Tendring's Heritage 5
- 1.3 Purpose of Appraisal 6
- 1.4 Planning Policy Context 6
- 1.5. Public Consultation 6

2. Thorpe-Le-Soken Conservation Area 7
- 2.1 Context and General Character 7
- 2.2 Location, Geology and Topography 7
- 2.3 Historical Overview 9
- 2.4 Revisions to the Boundary 14
- 2.5 Designated Heritage Assets 17
- 2.6 Contribution by Key Un-Listed Buildings 20
- 2.7 Heritage at Risk 25
- 2.8 Archaeological Potential 25

3. Assessment of Significance 26
- 3.1 Summary 26
- 3.2 Land Usage 26
- 3.3 Character Analysis 27
- 3.4 Views 37
- 3.5 Local Details 40
- 3.6 Beyond the Conservation Area Boundary 41

4. Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement 42
- 4.1 Car Parking and Traffic 42
- 4.2 Shop Frontages 43
- 4.3 Loss of Architecural Details 44
- 4.4 Unsympathetic Additions 44
- 4.5 Inappropriate Modern Development 46
- 4.6 Access and Integration 47
- 4.7 Neutral Contributors 47
- 4.8 Public Realm 48

5. Management Proposals 51
- 5.1 Positive Management: Short Term 51
- 5.2 Positive Management: Long Term 55
- 5.3 Funding Opportunities 56

6. Appendices 58
- 6.1 Bibliography 58
- 6.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance 59
- 6.3 Glossary 60

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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary

As defined by the 'Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, a Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Conservation area designation introduces a general control over developments affecting unlisted buildings and provides a basis for planning policies with an objective to conserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area was first designated by Tendring District Council in October 1969 and extended in November 1988. The special quality of Thorpe-Le-Soken Conservation Area derives from its wealth of historic buildings lining the High Street, which was fully established by the medieval period. Beyond the High Street, the village developed in connection with the medieval core and are included due to the intrinsic interest of their buildings. The Area contains a wealth of mature trees which contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Tendring District Council appointed Place Services to prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal. The document is provided as baseline information for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development within the Conservation Area or its setting.

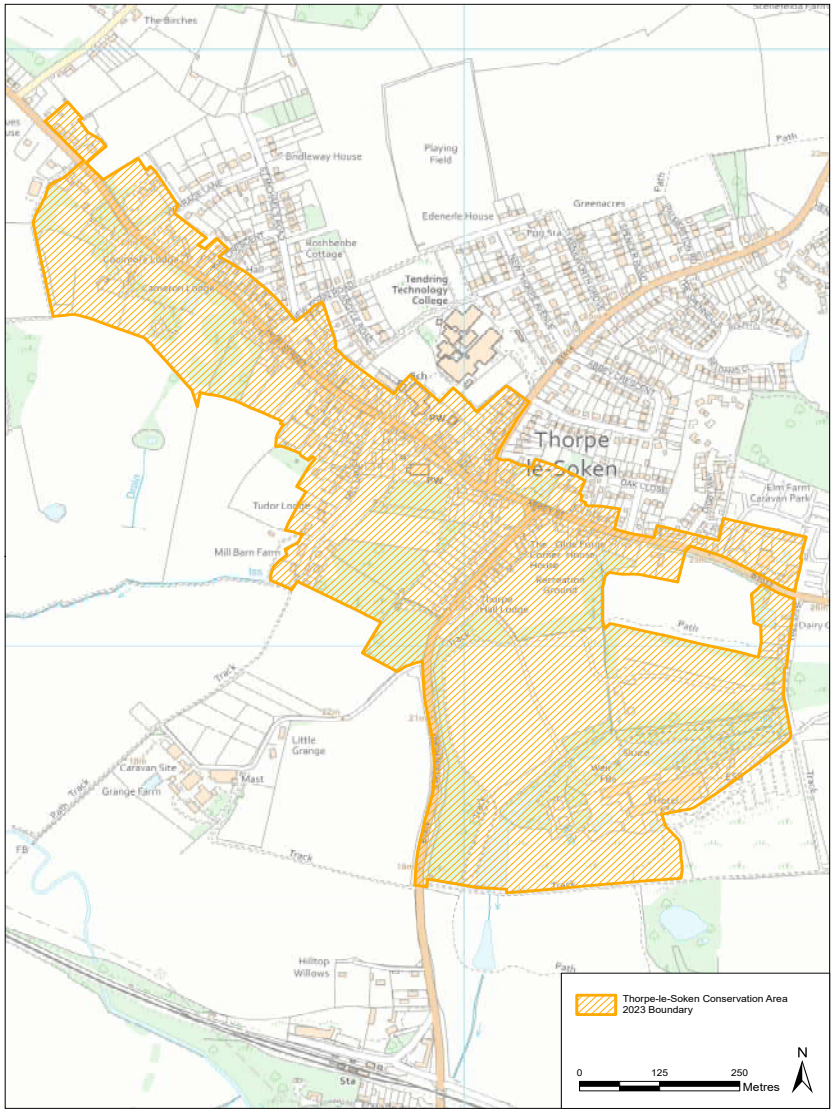

Figure 1 Conservation Area within its wider context

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1.2 Conserving Tendring's Heritage

This report provides an assessment of the historic development and character of Thorpe-le-Soken and outlines its special interest. The appraisal will also consider the significance of heritage assets and the contribution that these, along with their setting, make to the character of the area. The understanding of significance will be used to assess the susceptibility of the Character Areas to change, highlighting key assets of importance.

This assessment will consider how different Character Areas within Thorpe-le-Soken 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 impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character of Thorpe-le-Soken. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and analysis of the individual character areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights good design as one of twelve core principals of sustainable development. 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* (2019) and *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017).

Figure 2 Church of St Michael

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1.3 Purpose of Appraisal

This document should be used as a baseline to inform future change 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 Thorpe-le-Soken 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 chapter 16 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

The Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area is located within Tendring District. Local planning policy is set out in the Tendring District Local Plan 2013 - 2033 and Beyond (2022). Policies which are relevant to heritage assets include:

Policy SPL 3 - Sustainable Design

Policy PP 8 - Tourism

Policy PPL 3 - The Rural Landscape

Policy PPL 7 - Archaeology

Policy PPL 8 - Conservation Areas

Policy PPL 9 - Listed Buildings

Policy PPL 10 - Renewable energy generation and energy efficiency

1.5 Public Consultation

Tendring District Council held a six week public consultation on the draft Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan running from Monday 4th July to Monday 15th August 2022. An exhibition event was also held in the WI Hall, High Street, on the 14th July from 3-7pm.

Comments received during this period have been reviewed and encorporated into the final draft of this document, including boundary changes outlined in Section 2.4 below.

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2. Thorpe-Le-Soken Conservation Area

2.1 Context and General Character

Thorpe-le-Soken is situated in Tendring district in the north east of Essex. Two principle thoroughfares determine the layout of Thorpe-le-Soken; B1414 that runs north from Clacton-on-Sea to Harwich and the B1033 that runs parallel from Frinton-on-Sea to Weeley. The Conservation Area comprises of the historic High Street and includes the historic Park and Garden of Thorpe Hall.

The roads entering the Conservation Area are lined with mature trees and grass verges, particularly from the north-west, which provide a fluid transition from the rural surroundings into the Conservation Area. Thorpe-le-Soken is largely residential with a historic village core concentrated along the High Street, this contains a fine stock of historic buildings of different periods. Two Character Areas have been identified; the village core which has a tight grain of historic buildings of a modest scale, generally no more than two storeys in height, and Thorpe Hall which encompasses the Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden as well as the surrounding fields and historic access route of Hall Lane. Each Character Area will be addressed in detail in section 3.3. There are 22 listed buildings in the Conservation Area with many more making a positive contribution to the character and appearance.

Thorpe-le-Soken has maintained much of its historical character through the retention of traditional building materials, including red brick, render and plain tile roofs. As well as the prevalent wealth of historic architectural detailing, including bay windows, prominent door architraves, quoins and other brick detailing. Gaps in the building line provide sky gaps and views out to the surrounding countryside also contribute to the character of the area.

Whilst this appraisal focuses upon the area defined within the Conservation Area boundary it is important that consideration is given to those aspects of the wider environs and setting which contribute to its significance.

2.2 Location, Geology and Topography

The bedrock at Thorpe-le-Soken is clay, silt and sand of the Thames riverine deposit group. This sedimentary bedrock was formed approximately 34 to 56 million years ago in the Palaeogene Period. The sediments are marine in origin and comprise coarse to fine-grained slurries and debris that would have flowed from a river estuary into a deep-sea environment, forming graded beds.

Thorpe-le-Soken stands on a ridge of high ground running from north west to south east, between the sea at Hamford Water and the Holland Brook. The B1414 crosses the High Street at a staggered cross road. The crossroad is located at the centre of the Conservation Area from which the historic village core fans out to include the High Street to the west, Landermere Road to the North, Station Road to the South and extends southeast to include Thorpe Hall Park and Garden.There are some glimpsed views of the wider landscape between buildings and mature trees and planting. The location of the village within a rural landscape can be readily understood and this is an important aspect of the Conservation Area's setting.

Both Thorpe and Kirby-le-Soken to the east have expanded considerably in size. The early twentieth century garden at Thorpe Hall is a Registered Park and Garden and is included within the Conservation Area boundary. The Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area is situated within the Parish of Thorpe-Le-Soken, which according to the 2011 census, had an estimated population of 2034.

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2.3 Historical Overview

Thorpe-le-Soken has its roots in the medieval period though archaeological evidence for prehistoric occupation has been identified in and around the Conservation Area.

Prehistory: Palaeolithic to Iron Age

Thorpe-le-Soken's location on high ground and not far from the Essex coast provided an ideal place for occupation with easy access to the intertidal zone for early settlers. Palaeolithic flint tools have been recovered from the area of Thorpe le Soken though none can be accurately recorded as being located within the Conservation Area boundary. In terms of later prehistoric occupation, aerial photographic evidence records a double ring ditch within the grounds of Thorpe Hall within the Conservation Area and later occupation is also evident in the surrounding area outside the boundary.

Roman

There is evidence of Roman activity immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area at Thorpe Hall where excavation identified ditches, gullies and pits associated with settlement, possibly a nearby farmstead.

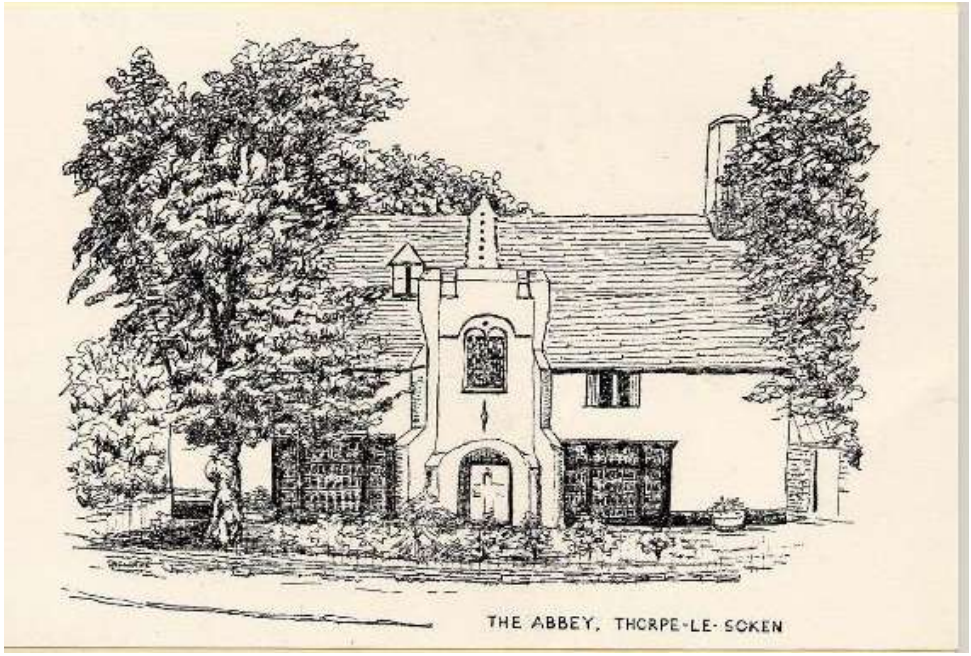

Figure 3 The Abbey dating to the sixteenth century (ECC Archives I/Mb 354/2/1)

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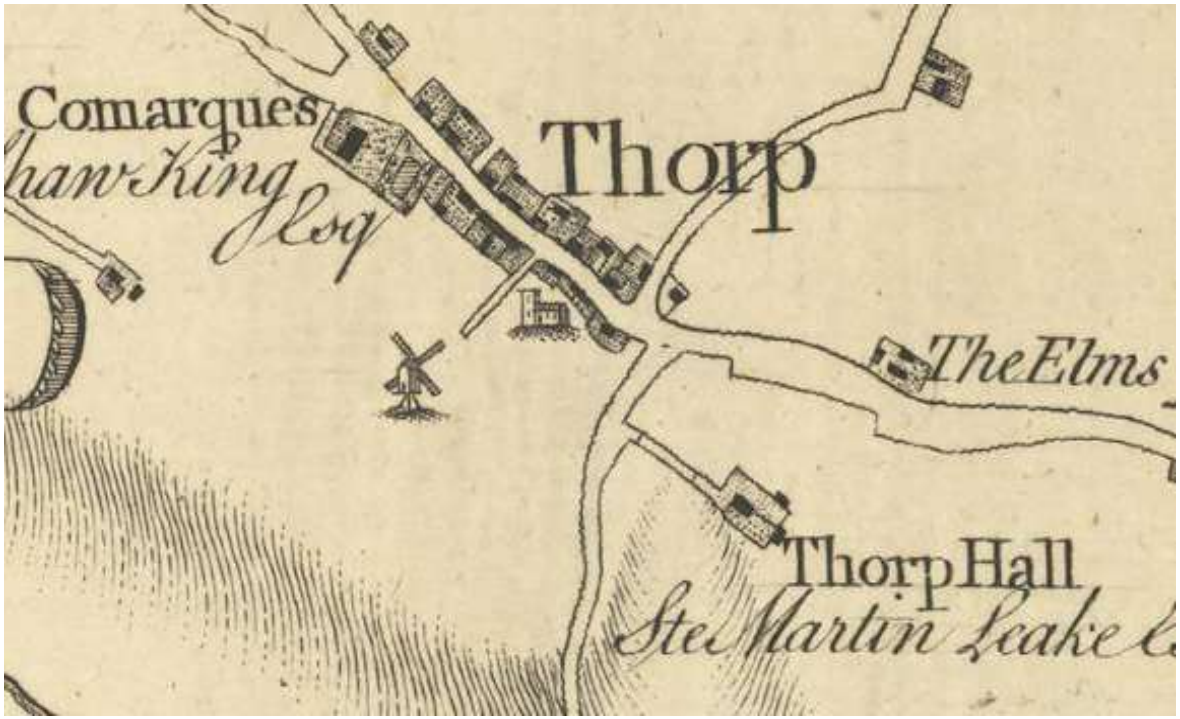

Figure 4 Chapman & Andre map 1777

Saxon and Medieval

In the late Saxon period, Thorpe-le-Soken formed part of 'The Sokens' which was later split into Kirby and Thorpe-le-Soken, and Walton-on-the-Naze. The suffix 'le-Soken' has Danish origins, which indicates a Viking presence in the area. The Domesday Book (1086) records 'The Sokens' as Aelduluesnasa which was owned by the Canon of St Paul's Cathedral before and after 1066. Thorpe-le-Soken did not become a separate manor until 1222. Fragments of Anglo-Saxon pottery have been recovered from the grounds of the earlier manor house. The manor house survived until the early nineteenth century when the majority of it was demolished and alterated by J. M. Leake in 1822.

In the medieval period the area to the south along the Holland Brook lay within the Gunfleet Estuary. The tidal estuary extended inland from Frinton and Clacton possibly as far as Weeley and small boats may have been able to venture as far upstream as Thorpe-le-Soken.

The medieval village, which was centred along the High Street, is evident today in the core of the existing village containing the Parish Church of St Michael, the guildhall and several timber framed properties, all of which are listed. The church, built in the sixteenth century, was later rebuilt in the nineteenth century. The guildhall, dating to the fifteenth century, now survives as the Bell Hotel and provides evidence of the settlement as a centre of commerce during the medieval period. The Abbey is an example of a high-status house, built in the mid-sixteenth century with an ornate frontage comprising a two-storey porch to the centre front with diagonal buttresses and a crenellation parapet and original chimney. The surrounding area retained its historic dispersed settlement pattern; small clusters of houses at Kirby and Thorpe Green and a wider landscape of isolated manors and farms.

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Post Medieval

The settlement of Thorpe-le-Soken continued to grow gradually as a linear settlement during the post-medieval period, extending from the High Street along both Landermere Road and Clacton Road. Some high-status properties indicate a degree of continued wealth and prosperity of the settlement, including Comarques and the vicarage, both at the eastern end of the village, which date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The arrival of the railway station in 1867 at Thorpe Maltings resulted in the further expansion of the settlement and though the station was located over half a mile away to the south of the village, the railway widened the connectivity and economic possibilities of the villagers. Coinciding with the new railway connection, new places of worship were built in the early nineteenth century, including the Baptist and Methodist chapels, as well as a Police Station and Magistrates Court on the edge of the settlement, while restoration of the medieval churches of Thorpe, along with its neighbours Kirby and Great Holland occurred at this time. A mill complex is evident on the 1875 map at the southern end of Mill Lane.

By the 1830s Thorpe Hall had been rebuilt by Mark Graystone Thompson, for John Martin Leake, as a small Georgian-style villa and included a stable yard, a gardener's cottage, a small barn, and a walled kitchen garden. It was sold in 1913 to Julian Byng, later Baron Byng, whose wife laid out new gardens and landscaping surrounding the Hall.

Figure 5 Photograph of Thorpe Hall, Thorpe-le-Soken (ERO IMb 354-1-4)

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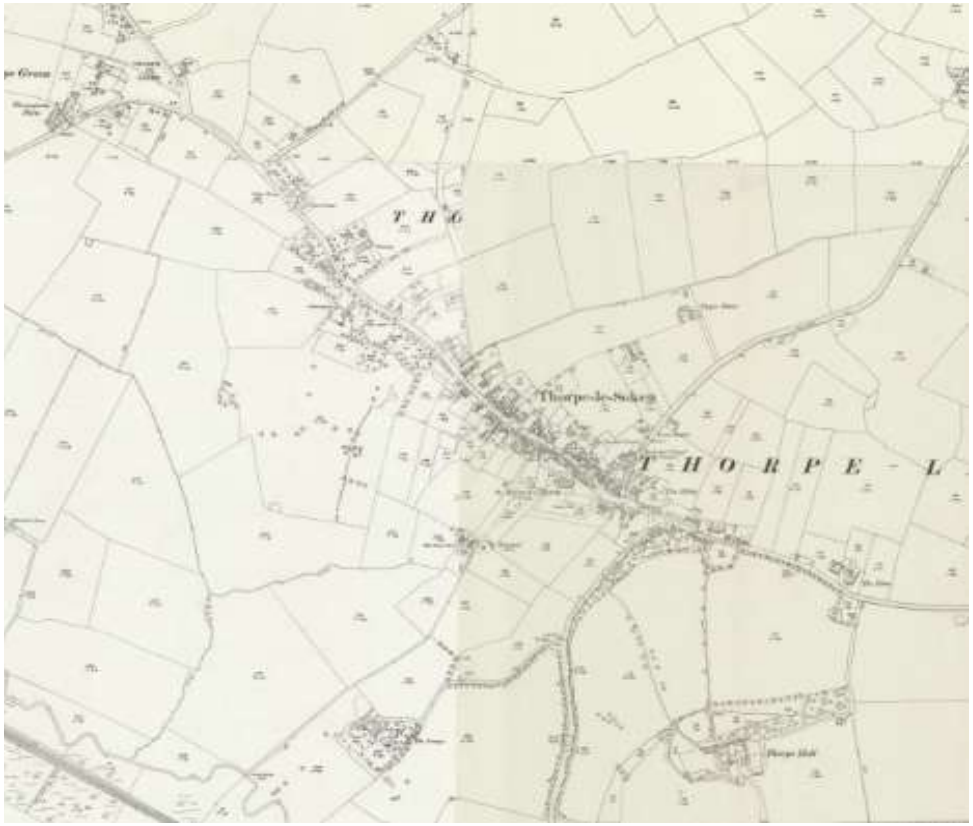

Figure 6 OS Map 25 Inch 1892-1913

Modern

Development within Thorpe-le-Soken increased into the early twentieth century, especially to the north and southeast along Landermere Road. A number of cottages were built within the Conservation Area after World War One and this was followed by the introduction of 'plotland style' development to the north of the Conservation Area. Plotland development occurred in Essex in the early twentieth century, this included the selling of small rural plots of land. Buyers were then allowed to build cottages, holiday bungalows or run the plot as a smallholding. The plotlands at Thorpe-le-Soken that were constructed during the inter-War years still remain but have been infilled with modern housing. During the First World War Major-General Byng, the owner of Thorpe Hall, was in command of the British Forces in Egypt. His wife Evelyn placed Thorpe Hall at the disposal of the British Red Cross, and it operated as an Auxiliary Hospital. A War Office List dated 1915 described the Auxiliary Hospital at Thorpe Hall with the "The Hon. Lady Byng, as Commandant" and stated the number of occupied beds being quoted as being between thirty-three and forty.[1]

A "New Town" expansion projected was also proposed in the early twentieth century but it was never completed. A grid of streets was proposed to the north east of the High Street, to be accessed by the road still know as New Town Road. In the event, only part of the New Town layout was realised, with parallel roads off Landermere Road (the B1414 to Harwich). Later and more piecemeal development was carried out on the south east side of Landermere Road and on the northern side of Frinton Road.

1 Great War British Home Hospitals https://greatwarhomehospitals.wordpress.com/home/thorpe-le-soken-thorpe-le-soken-auxiliary-hospital/ Accessed 28/02/2020

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Figure 7 Photograph of Mitchell's Cash Stores, Thorpe-le-Soken now 'Tesco' (ERO I/Mb 354/1/3)

Figure 8 Thorpe Hall in the early to mid-twentieth century (Home Hospitals, courtesy of Heather Anne Johnson)

Wartime defensive structures were built within Thorpe-le-Soken including defensive road barriers, though these have since been demolished. An ammunition shelter west of the church is still extant. During the Second World War Thorpe Hall was occupied by the Ministry of Defence, again as a hospital. It was later sold in 1988. The hall built for John Martin Leake was demolished and replaced by a modern spa building which was completed in 2010.

Parts of the existing garden at the Hall have been incorporated into the new landscape design of the existing Lifehouse Spa Hotel, which now occupies the site. The Hall's ornamental lakes also survive and are depicted on the Tithe map of 1842 and are probably earlier. The gardens of the former Hall are protected as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (List UID: 1000521).

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2.4 Revisions to the Boundary

Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area was first outlined in 1969. It was later extended in 1988 and has remained unchanged since. As part of this review, the Conservation Area boundary has been revised to reflect changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Thorpe-le-Soken's unique built environment and its special interest.

Boundary Extensions

This assessment has extended the boundary to the north west to include the dwelling of Culver House and the Coach House and adjacent property boundary. These nineteenth century buildings are located on the periphery of the historic settlement, on the point of transition from the village to the countryside. Both buildings have an aesthetic value that would be a beneficial contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and the brick-built boundary wall fronting the Colchester Road also contributes to the character of the area. Culver House retains its original sash windows and door surround, while the Coach House, though modified, has a decorative barge board and a timber louvered lantern on its slate roof.

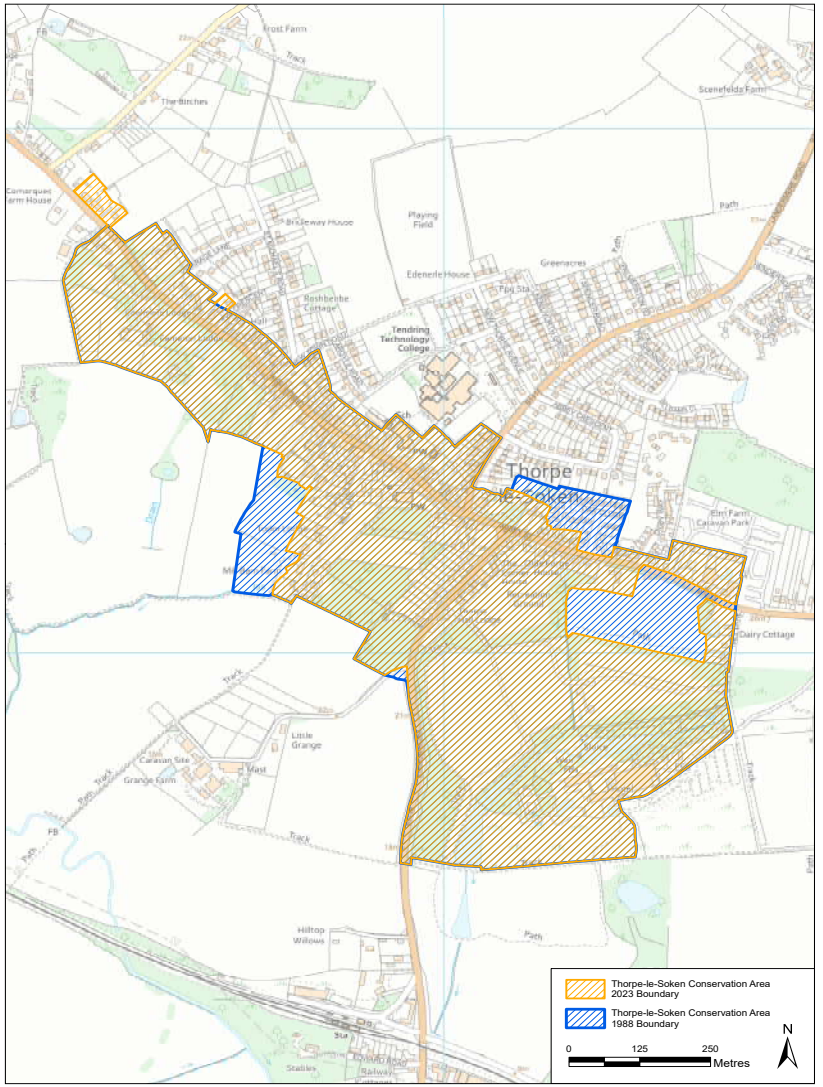

Figure 9 Map showing Boundary Changes made to the Conservation Area in 2023

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The boundary to the north has also been extended a short distance along the west side of The Crescent to include Bloomfield Lodge. This property retains its original architectural features and its inclusion within the boundary would make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The building is early twentieth century in date and probably represents the initial stages of the New Town expansion that was proposed for Thorpe-le-Soken, but never fully realised. The bungalow has an aesthetic quality and a highly crafted joinery to its front porch and windows.

Boundary Reductions

To the south of the High Street and to the west of Mill Lane, the boundary has been consolidated to follow the rear boundaries of the properties along the Hight Street down to the bowling green and to remove the triangular piece of agricultural land, so the boundary follows the existing plot edges. The open green fields from within the Conservation Area boundary have been removed as they make a significant contribution to the setting of Thorpe-le-Soken as an isolated, rural settlement, but lack the special historic interest and character deserving of Conservation Area status.

Figure 10 Culver House

Figure 11 The Coach House

Figure 12 Broomfield Lodge

Figure 13 Open fields to the west of properties on Mill Lane

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Figure 14 The Lifehouse Spa car park

Figure 15 Oak Close

The contribution this land makes to the setting of the Conservation Area will not be diminished through its removal from the boundary. The exclusion of this open space would help to consolidate the protection of the nearby areas that have a special historic interest and character, whilst providing a clear area of setting, with an agrarian character.

The views across this open setting are an important factor in allowing the Conservation Area to be experienced and appreciated.

The modification of the boundary also exclude the car park that serves the Lifehouse Spa. The car park does not form part of the Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden and it does not make a positive contribution to the historical or architectural merit of the Conservation Area.

Two modern housing developments have also been removed: Oak Close, which dates from the mid-to-late twentieth century, and land to the south of Frinton Road, which was under construction at the time of assessment. The properties are of little historical significance and make a limited contribution to the Conservation Area's special interest.

These alterations to the boundary of the Conservation Area will provide a more definitive and rational boundary. It will create a robust conservation area boundary and improve an understanding of its setting.

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2.5 Designated Heritage Assets

Conservation Area Designation History

Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area was first designated on 2nd October 1969, principally to protect the wealth of historic buildings lining its sinuous main street. Included in the original boundary were properties with open plots to the south of the High Street and a small area of woodland to the south of Sy Michael's Church. The churchyard, burial ground and woodland covering an area of 4.08 hectares is also designated as a County Wildlife site known as Thorpe Greens and managed by the Parish Council. In 1988 the Conservation Area boundary was extended to include the grounds and surviving buildings at Thorpe Hall. A Conservation Area Appraisal document was written and adopted in March 2006. However, the protection offered by Conservation Area designation and the Grade II Listing of the Registered Park and Garden of Thorpe Hall, did not prevent the demolition of Thorpe Hall in 2010.

There are twenty-two listed buildings and one Registered Park and Garden located in the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area. There are four Grade II* listed buildings and eighteen Grade II listed buildings. There are no Scheduled Monuments in the Conservation Area.

Grade II* listed buildings:

- The Abbey (List entry: 1322618)
- The Bell Hotel (List entry: 1112112)
- Parish Church of St Michael (List entry: 1147716)
- Comarques (List entry: 1112108)

Grade II listed buildings:

- Police Station (List entry: 1380567)
- Thorpe Baptist Church (List entry: 1147653)
- Loblollies (List entry: 1112110)
- Nos 1 and 2 Church Cottages, Trinity Byegones and 'The Granary' wholefood store (List entry: 1322622)
- Mill House (List entry: 1112111)
- The Oaks Restaurant and The Old Bakehouse (List entry: 1147697)
- Le Soken Antiques (List entry: 1322621)
- Ashdon And Homeleigh (List entry: 1308410)
- Green Stead (List entry: 1112078)
- Hawthorns (List entry: 1112109)
- The Old Vicarage (List entry: 1322619)
- Mill Barn Farmhouse (List entry: 1322624)
- Elm Farmhouse (List entry: 1147615)
- Tortworth (List entry: 1147822)
- Bowling Green Cottage (List entry: 1112115)
- Ivy Cottage (List entry: 1147779)
- Oakley House (List entry: 1112113)
- The Trossachs (List entry: 1147774)

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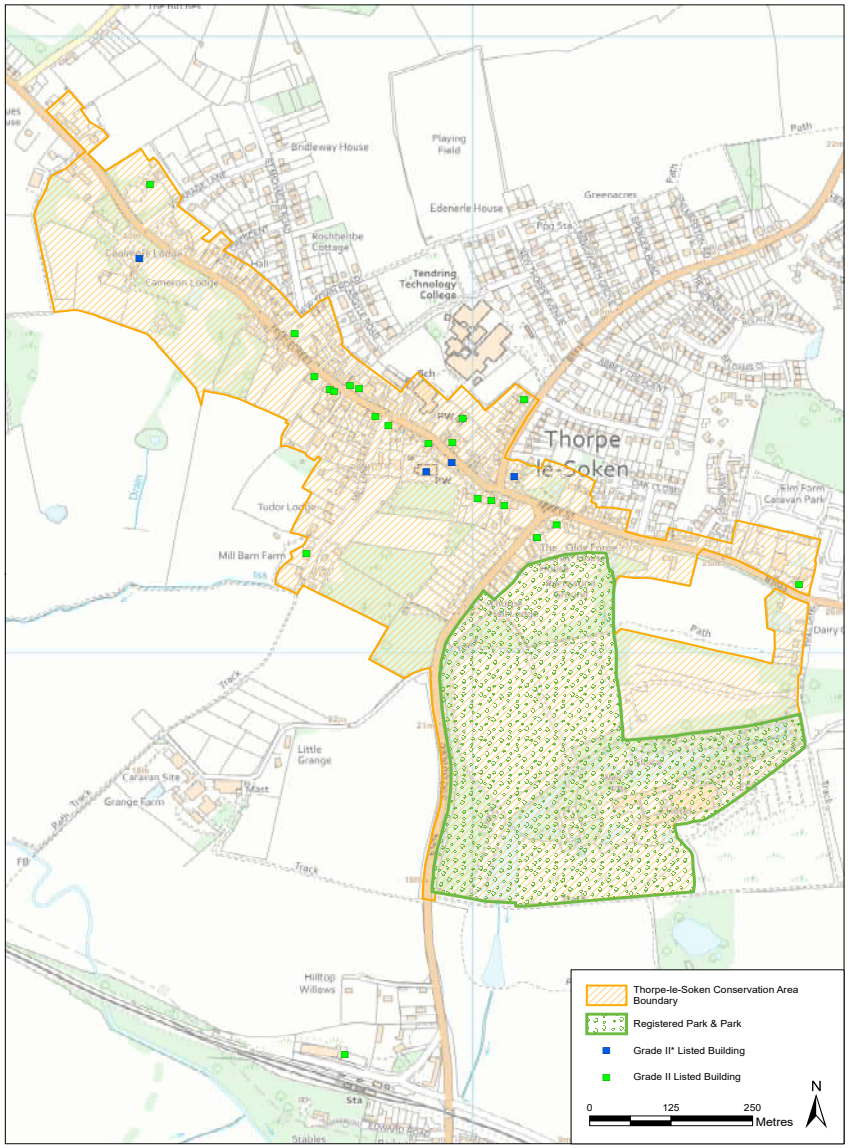

Figure 16 Designated heritage assets map

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Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden. Grade II (List UID: 1000521).

The manor of Thorpe was in ecclesiastical ownership until the Dissolution of the monasteries (1539), when it was granted by the Crown to Sir Thomas Darcy in 1551. The estate passed through various owners until John Martin Leake rebuilt the Hall as a small Georgian-style villa in 1822. There is a long history of gardens existing on the site of Thorpe Hall. A series of garden compartments are recorded as accompanying the house leased to William Gorsuch in 1802, while the lakes which form the centrepiece are shown in existence on the Tithe map of 1842 and are probably earlier. Although Chapman and Andre's county map of 1777 is at too small a scale to record the lakes, accounts of a fire in 1769 suggest that water from a fishpond within five rods of the mansion made it possible to save the Hall.[2]

In 1913 Lady Byng, wife of Julian Byng, later first Baron Byng of Vimy, laid out new gardens, elements of which survive today. She received advice from Robert Wallace, a landscape gardener from Colchester. Lord Byng died in 1934 and his wife remained at the Hall until her own death in 1949. During the Second World War the Hall was occupied by the Ministry of Defence.

On her death, Lady Byng left the estate to her companion, who in 1951 sold it to Sir George Nelson for use as a Lady Nelson Convalescent Home for employees of English Electric. It remained as such until 1988, run by the Electrical and Electronics Industries Benevolent Association, when it was sold to the Ryan Group. It was demolished in 2010 by Tangram Leisure.

2 Historic England Thorpe Hall. https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000521. Accessed 28/02/20

Figure 17 Views within Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden

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2.6 Contribution by Key Un-Listed Buildings

There is currently no list of buildings and features of local historical and/or architectural interest in Tendring District. The following buildings are considered to make a positive contribution to the area's historical and architectural significance. These should be considered for local listing and are currently considered non-designated heritage assets with regard to the NPPF.

- Coolmore Lodge, High Street
- Vistan, High Street
- The Rose and Crown Public House, High Street
- Cottage Pye and Aston, High Street
- Holbys Row, High Street
- The Dutch Gable, High Street
- Orchard Cottages, High Street
- The Limes, High Street
- The Furze, High Street
- Suffolk House, High Street
- Red House, High Street
- Primary School, High Street
- Harry's Bar, High Street
- Langley House, High Street
- Thatch Cottage, Mill Lane

Figure 18 Coolmore Lodge

Figure 19 Vistan

Figure 20 The Rose and Crown Public House

Figure 21 Cottage Pye and Aston

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Figure 22 Holbys Row

Figure 23 The Dutch Gable

Figure 24 Orchard Cottages

Figure 25 The Limes

Figure 26 The Furze

Figure 27 Suffolk House

© Place Services 2023

Figure 28 Red House

Figure 29 Primary School

Figure 30 Harry's Bar

Figure 31 Langley House

Figure 32 Thatch Cottage

Figure 33 Remains of Old Mill

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- Remains of Old Mill, Mill Lane
- Kirk View and Donnington Cottage, High Street
- Rolph House, High Street
- Three Steps, Landermere Road
- 23 Landermere Road
- Ivy House, High Street
- Charfield, The Square
- Ashtree and No. 1-10, Station Road
- Field Mouse Cottage, Abbey Street
- 1 and 2 Ivy Cottages, Abbey Street
- Bell Cottage and Lynton, Abbey Street
- Wild Goose Studio, Abbey Street

Figure 34 Donnington and Kirk Cottage

Figure 35 Rolph House

Figure 36 Three Steps

Figure 37 Landermere Road

© Place Services 2023

Figure 38 Ivy House

Figure 39 Charfield

Figure 40 Station Road Dwellings

Figure 41 1 and 2 Ivy Cottages

Figure 42 Bell Cottage Lynton

Figure 43 Wild Goose Studio

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2.7 Heritage at Risk

There are no buildings within the Conservation Area included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. The Heritage at Risk Register includes historic buildings and sites at risk of being lost through neglect, decay or deterioration. It includes all types of designated heritage assets (although only Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings are assessed), including conservation areas, and the aim of the Register is to focus attention on those places in greatest need.

The Heritage at Risk Register includes historic buildings and sites at risk of being lost through neglect, decay or deterioration. There are no individual buildings on the At Risk Register. However, the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area is on the Heritage At Risk Register. HE has identified the overall condition of the area is fair, however, the area is highly vulnerable and with a deteriorating trend. Negative impact can have an adverse effect upon the way the community experience and how they feel about the area. By identifying and redressing the main threats to the Conservation Area it will help protect their historic and architectural character[3].

3 https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/conservation-areas-at-risk/

2.8 Archaeological Potential

Within the Conservation Area archaeological activity is recorded from aerial photographic evidence as cropmark features around Thorpe Hall, including a possible prehistoric ritual monument, field boundaries and extraction pits of unknown dates. Abutting the Conservation Area and within the immediate area further cropmark features, including a small group of ring ditches, indicate continuation of agricultural and possible prehistoric activity. Archaeological investigations immediately adjacent and surrounding the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area have demonstrated good survival of archaeological remains from the Roman, early medieval and post-medieval period. At Thorpe Hall the proximity of the excavations to the Conservation Area boundary suggest it is highly likely that further evidence for Roman settlement activity is likely to extend into the Conservation Area. The excavations also revealed some loss of features identified through cropmark evidence probably through agricultural practices such as deep ploughing.

Medieval and later settlement evidence is more likely to be sited along the street frontage, the backyard areas may also contain evidence for ancillary activity, such as wells, cess-pits, yards and middens, as well as small-scale industrial activity. Above ground historic garden features survive within the grounds of Thorpe Hall and are protected as a designated monument, there is potential for further remains associated with the landscaping of Thorpe Hall to survive below ground.

The soils within the Conservation Area are likely to be acidic in places and not beneficial to the survival of bone or organic material, however excavations at Thorpe Hall have demonstrated good survival of pottery, ceramic material and metal.

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3. Assessment of Significance

3.1 Summary

The special interest of the Conservation Area is derived from its development as a medieval village with its ribbon development along the High Street still evident today, its high density of quality historic buildings of different periods, and rural village character. Within the Conservation Area, a substantial amount of the village's built heritage has survived and evolved through complex growth and regeneration. Its historic buildings make an important contribution to the character, significance and special interest of the Conservation Area.

3.2 Land Usage

Commercial use of the area is concentrated in the village core along the High Street which is book ended by two pubs; The Bell Inn to the east and the Rose and Crown to the west. Beyond this core the land use is predominantly residential and includes buildings that serve the residents of the Thorpe-le-Soken, such as St. Michael's Church and Rolph Church of England Primary School. To the southwest of the Conservation Area is Thorpe Hall Park and Garden, which is the former site of Thorpe Manor. This site now contains Lifehouse Spa and Hotel and the wider landscape is enjoyed as a garden and pleasure grounds.

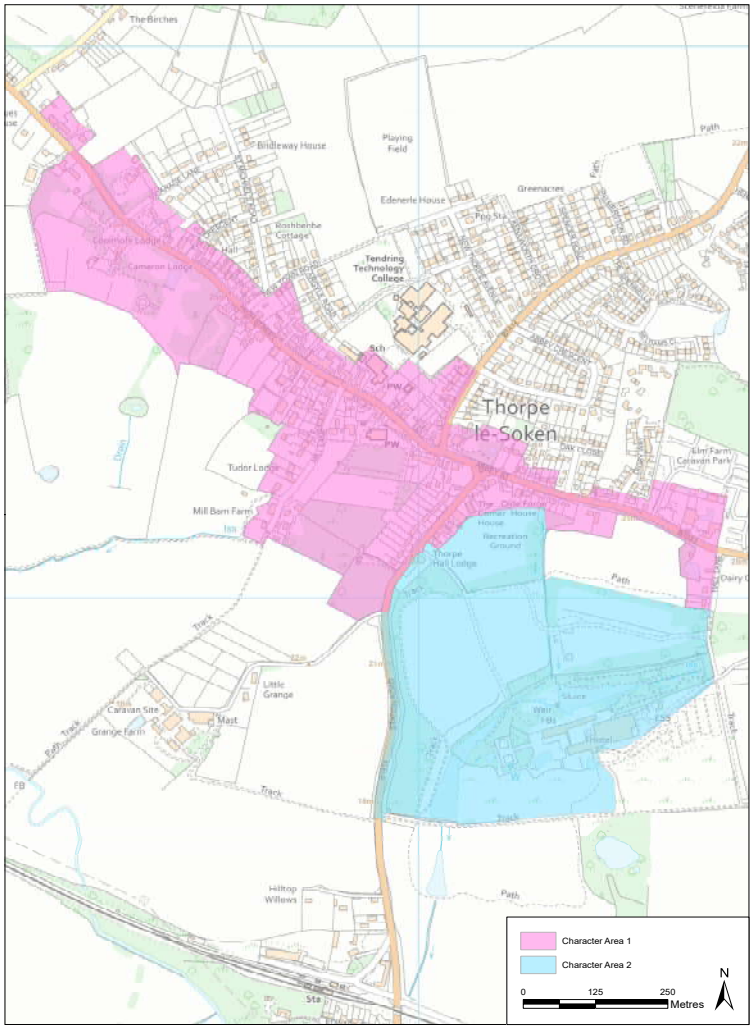

Figure 44 Map showing Character Areas idenified within the Conservation Area

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3.3 Character Analysis

The Conservation Area has been divided into two Character Areas. This sub-division acknowledges the differing functions, building stock and scale

1 The Village Core

The boundary of this Character Area is parallel to the High Street and along the rear of existing property boundaries from the Grade II listed Old Vicarage and terminating at Elm Farmhouse. It extends to include the two properties on the west side of The Crescent including Mill Lane and Station Road as well as the west side of Landermere Road as far as the police station. This character area contains the wealth of Thorpe-le-Soken's historic buildings dating from the fifteenth century to twenty-first century, providing an eclectic mix of architectural features that contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Layout

Thorpe-le-Soken High Street runs east to west and is intersected by the B1414 (Station Road to the south and Landermere Road to the north). This road layout is illustrated on the 1777 Chapman and Andre Map of Essex (Figure 5). The building layout is tightly grained between the Rose and Crown pub and the Grade II*

Figure 45 Views of Village Core Character Area with St Michaels Church

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listed Parish Church of St Michael and forms the earliest element o f Thorpe-le-Soken. Either side of this core, including Landermere Road and Station Road, are low density residential properties that front the street. Mill Lane, which is sideroad of the High Street to the south, is more rural and verdant in appearance; most properties are detached, set on larger plots with front garden planting and views out to the surrounding open land. The positioning of Grade II listed Elm Farmhouse, on the outskirts of the village, contributes to an understanding of the historic agricultural land use surrounding the Conservation Area. The strong verdant views from Elm Farmhouse into the Conservation Area add to the appreciation of Thorpe-le-Soken's rural context. However, its agrarian setting has been compromised by the infill of modern development.

Building materials

There is variation in the building materials used throughout this character area which reflects the historical development of the village from the fifteenth century to present day. The most commonly used building materials are red brick and red clay roof tiles are most prominent on the tower and porch of Parish Church of St Michael's are mirrored throughout the area. Painted brick is also a commonly seen throughout the area which provides a variety of texture and appearance. There are several rendered houses within the village core such as The Trossachs, The Mill House and Norfolk House which break up the use of red brick and are complimentary to the High Street's appearance. Timber framed buildings are common with many concealled behind later brick facades or render. There are some examples of exposed timber framing. Le Soken Antiques is a sixteenth century timber framed and plastered building with some exposed framing and weather boarding and it also makes a positive contribution to the area.

Figure 46 Building Material Palette

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Figure 48 The Limes

Figure 47 The Old Vicrage

There are some striking nineteenth century buildings, some with Dutch gables and fine chimney stacks and pots. A modern extravagant chimney can be found on a new building on New Town Road, where the architect has successfully referenced examples of nineteenth century chimney styles within Thorpe-le-Soken. There are early twentieth century dwellings which are Arts and Crafts in architectural style, with detailed timber joinery and stained-glass windows and these are located towards the north-western end of the Conservation Area. Towards the centre of the Conservation Area fine examples of historic timber joinery can be seen including the bay windows of former shops, elaborate door surrounds and many original and historic sash windows.

The Limes shares a similar material palette to the materials used in The Old Vicarage which is a Grade II listed property in gault and red brick in Flemish bond and roofed with slate. Each are distinctively different in scale and materials to other properties in the Conservation Area. The Limes is not listed; however, it has been identified as building that makes a positive contribution to the area. It's differing use of materials makes it an attractive and interesting focal point of the High Street.

Boundary treatments

Many buildings along the High Street front directly onto the pavement edge but others have small front yards or parking areas. Red brick walls laid in Flemish bond are a common boundary treatment within this area which strengthens local character. Low metal railings painted black and timber picket fences are also common features within the street scene. The uniformity of detailing and materials of front boundary treatments throughout the area contributes to the area's character and significance. There are examples within the Conservation Area where brick wall boundaries have been removed to accommodate a front parking spaceand this has a detrimental impact on the areas character and appearance. The removal of boundary treatments to accommodate parking should be resisted as this removes an attribute of the Conservation Area that contributes to its significance.

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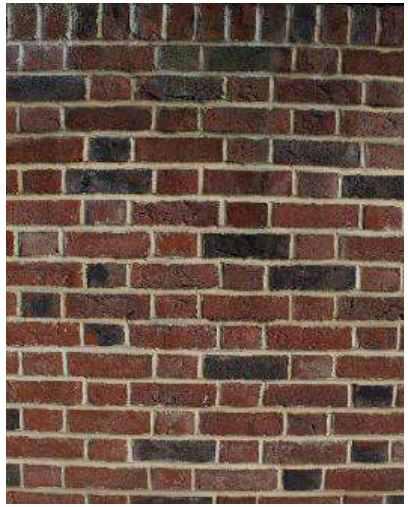

Figure 49 Flemish bond brick-built boundaries contribute to the character of the Conservation Area

Figure 50 Fences are common in the Conservation Area's periphery, though post and panel fences do not make a beneficial contribution to the character

Figure 51 Steel railings outside a recent development on the High Street have a detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area

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Timber fences and hedges are a common feature in the peripheral areas of the Conservation Area. Some of the fences are more intricate and make a beneficial contribution to the character of the area. Close-boarded panels and concrete post fences are also used and these make a less beneficial contribution. A set of galvanised steel railings has recently been intoduced into the Conservation area, fronting a modern development on the High Street. Their modern, untreated finish is incongruous within the streetscape.

There are good examples of iron work at The Abbey and Comarques; the design, scale and detailing of these boundary treatments indicate the building's status. The fringes of the village core, including Mill Lane, Station Road, Landermere Road, Frinton Road and Hall Lane, have boundary treatments that are indicative of the separation from the denser layout of the High Street to a loser grain, with properties set back from the road, grass verges and increased density of mature trees lining the road. Boundary treatments along The Crescent, Mill Lane and Hall Lane are more reflective of a rural character.

Open space

The Crown pub car park provides an open and unobstructed view to the Grade II listed Baptist Church, this open space is significant as the Baptist Church forms a focal point of the Village Core.There are open green spaces within this Village Core Character Area, mainly located behind the principal building line of the High Street and around Mill Lane. There is an approach towards the Church and High Street through the woodland of Thorpe Greens Country Wildlife site, where the woodland gives way to an open field and the churchyard.

The Conservation Area becomes more open in character along Mill Lane, which runs to the south of the High Street. To the east of Mill Lane, the Church is a prominent visible landmark and access can be gained into its churchyard and the Thorpe Greens Country Wildlife site. To the west of Mill Lane, beyond the property boundaries, there is an area of open fields which contribute to the rural setting of this part of the Conservation Area.

Figure 52 The Abbey

Figure 53 The Baptist Church viewed from the High Street

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Figure 54 The church from the open land to its south

Figure 55 Fields to the west of Mill Lane

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2 Thorpe Hall and Hall Lane

The character of this area is comprised of the land of, and surrounding, Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden. Although Thorpe Manor has been demolished, the site remains significant due to the rich history of the landscape. The significance of this Character Area derives from it being the former site of a locally significant private residence and its designed landscape, elements of which remain today. The garden and grounds of Thorpe Hall were once a reflection of the status and wealth of its owners and occupiers and though the Hall is gone, the legibility of its landscaped surroundings survives.

Hall Lane has been included in this character area as it forms one of the historic entrances to Thorpe Hall and therefore provides an indication of how this land was used.

The Registered Park and Garden is roughly twelve hectares in size and bounded to the west by Station Road, to the south by a public footpath bordering arable land, to the east by farmland and Hall Lane, and to the north by the gardens of houses fronting Frinton Road. The main approach to the park is currently from an entrance on the southern side of Frinton Road, via Lifehouse Drive.

Figure 56 Grounds of Thorpe Hall

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Figure 57 The original gated entrance and lodge to Thorpe Hall on Station Road

Figure 58 The largest lake at Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden, the Lifehouse Spa building is in the background

A second route into the park, via a public footpath, also runs from Frinton Road southwards along Hall Lane. The historic main drive to the site of the Hall forms the third access to the park and this approached the Hall from the north-west, off the northern end of Station Road. The entrance still exists with a substantial mid-twentieth century lodge, though the original gate posts are removed.

To the south and west of the modern spa building, pools and formal gardens survive. Broad paved terrace with low red-brick walls with brick summerhouses are located to the west of the spa building and these lead to a lily pool, surrounded by trees. A second larger pool fed by a stream is situated to the west of the lily pool.

Layout

Thorpe Hall character area is located to the south east of Conservation Area. The area is bounded to the west by Station Road, a footpath and arable land to the south, to the east by Hall Lane and farmland, and bounded to the North by Frinton Road. The boundary of this Character Area follows the boundary of the Registered Park and Garden but extends north to include Hall Lane, it then runs linear along south side of Frinton Road to meet the boundary of the Park and Garden at the rear of the property on the junction of Station Road.

The Park and Garden is accessed by two verdant driveways. The first from the northern end of Station Road is accessed through gates hung on red brick piers with low rendered walls (Figure 56). This route runs east across the land until it intersects with Hall Lane. The layout of this driveway is evident of the Chapman and Andre Map of 1777 and corresponds with the driveway that appears on the 1874 OS Map. Hall Lane runs south from Frinton Road, there is vehicle access part way but the route into the Park is only accessible by foot.[4] Lifehouse Drive is currently the main access approach to the Park and Garden which also runs south from Frinton Road and bends south west to approach the Spa building.

4 Thorpe Hall, Thorpe-Le-Soken – 1000521 Historic England", Historicengland.Org.Uk, 2020 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000521> [Accessed 19 March 2020].

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The north of the character area is comprised of arable land divided by mature trees and shrubbery. There is a car park located on the south east of the site which serves the Lifehouse Spa & Hotel.

The immediate area around the former manor house was a skilfully planned landscape that reflected the fashions of its day, some original features still remain from the garden laid out by Lady Byng. Red brick walls and pagodas, ceramic pantiles and sunken gardens are characteristic of the gardens and these provide a Far Eastern theme to many of the structures. The area is heavily secluded by mature trees that line the road, this contributes to its significance and privacy from the principal village core.

Built form

Thorpe Hall was demolitioned in the early 2000s due to a deterioration in the buildings structural condition and was replaced by a spa building, completed in 2010. After the demolition of Thorpe Hall, the new spa was a departure from the earlier building and indeed, from the form, scale and materiality of any other building in the Conservation Area. The spa building is stark and unadorned, with a light grey rendered finish and modern windows with Juliet balconies. Another large building in the spa complex is yet more strikingly modern with black timber cladding and a flat roof. The loss of Thorpe Hall had a detrimental impact on the character of this part of the Conservation Area and the significance of the Registered Park and Garden. The new spa buildings failed to redress the imbalance that resulted from the loss of Thorpe Hall.

Figure 59 The footpath into the Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden

Figure 61 The Lifehouse Spa building and an ornamental pond

Figure 60 Ornamental garden structures within the Registered Park and Garden

Figure 62 The Lifehouse Spa and an adjacent building

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Boundary treatment:

Some properties along Hall Lane have introduced substantial hardstanding and inappropriate boundary treatments which detract from the rural character of the secondary smaller lanes. Bollards and lighting along pathways are not complimentary of the character to the Registered Park and Garden. Hardstanding in the immediate area of the site previously occupied by the manor, is modern and detracts from the appearance of the Park and Garden and Character Area.

Figure 63 Examples of Boundary Treatments

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3.4 Local Details

There are several reoccurring architectural details in the Conservation Area which contribute to the area's significance. A notable and unusual feature is a 'V' shaped angled interlocking gauged brick lintel, which is a repeated architectural detail throughout the Conservation Area. It can be seen on several nineteenth century buildings and extensions to earlier buildings in the Conservation Area.

Examples of this detail can be seen on Bell Cottages, the arched entrance of Norfolk House, west flank elevation of Tortworth and Cottage Pye.

The fenestration arrangement of Cottage Pye has been altered as the entrance door is now located under the window lintel. This angled interlocking lintel details appears to be unique to the Tendering District and should be retained to maintain local distinctiveness. It may have originated with a single bricklayer, possibly employed by the Thorpe Estate. Other local detailing include quoin detailing and prominent chimneys which have also been mirrored in some modern developments, notably Abbey Gardens and rendered house east side of New Town Road notably Abbey Gardens housing development off Frinton Road and White Thorn Lodge on New Town Road. Both are a good example of appropriate development.

Curved bay windows are present throughout the High Street and at Charfield. These are indicative of their prior function as High Street shops, the majority have now been converted to residential use. Although weatherboarding is not a typical building material within the Conservation Area, there are several properties with weather boarding on side and rear elevations of properties.

Figure 64 Examples of 'V' shaped red brick lintels

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Figure 65 Built Material Palette

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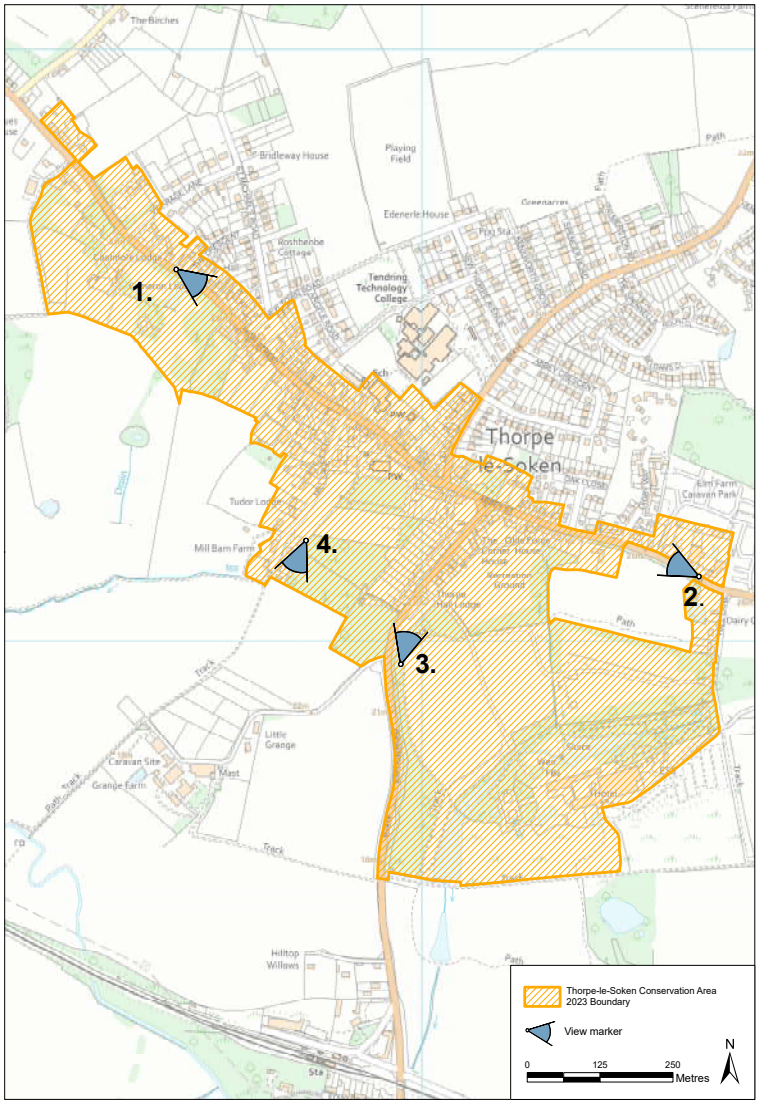

Figure 66 Map showing Key Views in the Area

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Figure 67 Views in and towards the Conservation Area

3.5 Views

Key views are identified on Figure 66. The views included are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there are numerous other views of significance. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should consider the views below and any others which may be relevant or bespoke to that proposal. It should also be considered how these views alter in character between winter and summer months.

Along the High Street there are several gaps in the building line which provide views of open skies and mature trees. Outward views looking south from Mill Lane are strikingly verdant and contrast to the urban High Street, these views contribute to the appreciation of the village within a historic rural landscape. There are key views of St Michael's Church and its prominent tower throughout the Conservation Area; most notably when travelling east or west on the B1033 into the village core. The Church is also a focal point and waymarker from footpaths in rural landscape to the south the Conservation Area. Gaps in the building line also provide glimpses of the prominent Church tower.

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3.6 Beyond the Conservation Area Boundary

Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area also draws its significance from its setting and surrounding area, most notably from the undeveloped rural landscape that encircles the village. The setting of the Conservation Area contributes to our understanding of its development as a rural village and the influence of Thorpe Manor on the Thorpe-le-Soken's development as a settlement.

Wider Setting

The wider landscape of rural and arable farmland can be seen from several locations within the Conservation Area. It is sometimes apparent in views from within the settlement and along the High Street, where the open landscape to the south can be seen down lanes and alleyways branching off from the High Street. The surrounding arable land provides a wealth of green and open space, which makes an important contribution Thorpe-le-Soken's setting as a rural village and enhances the manner in which it is experienced and understood. The fields behind properties along the High Street and beyond Mill Lane have been identified from the Conservation Area boundary.

To the north of the Conservation Area, and outside its boundary, along the east side of Landermere Road there is a 1930s housing development. These properties are either detached or semi-detached and largely retain their original form and appearance. They are set back from the road with greener boundary treatments which signify the transition from urban settlement to the rural landscape. 47 Landermere Road is a late nineteenth century detached property; it exhibits many characteristics and qualities of the Conservation Area and makes a positive contribution to its setting. However, it is impractical to extend the boundary to include this property it due to its distance from the settlement.

Figure 68 Wider Rural Setting

Figure 69 Landermere Road

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4. Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement

The following key issues have been identified and are summarised below in brief. The list is in no way exhaustive and neither are the issues identified unique to Thorpe-le-Soken with many being shared with other Conservation Areas.

There is an opportunity to generally improve the street scene and communal space within the Conservation Area. The community areas and pavements have been compromised by heavy traffic and are often crowded with parked cars. For example, the area surrounding the central Thorpe-le-Soken Village sign is dominated by hardstanding and cars parked along pavements. Cars parked on the pavement also detract from the access to the Church. Thorpe Hall Character Area is generally well maintained. There is an opportunity to improve public access to this Character Area through appropriate signage and well maintained access routes. This would enhance awareness of the Thorpe Hall Park and Garden.

4.1 Car Parking and Traffic

Car parking and heavy traffic flow is an inevitable concern within historic settlements and is applicable to the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area. There are several small private car parks to the rear of properties along the High Street that serve some shops and businesses for example, car parks that serve customers of The Crown and The Bell Inn as well as car parks behind Alfie's Barber Shop, Harry's Restaurant and Loblollies. The discrete access ways to the side and location of buildings and the location of car parks behind the High Street ensure that they do not become a detracting feature.

Along the High Street residential parking is limited to private driveways and on-street and pavement parking. The on-street parking detracts from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, the addition of front driveways and removal of front gardens and boundary treatments along the High Street is inappropriate and the retention, or reinstatement, of street front boundaries should

Figure 70 Parking and heavy traffic on the High Street

be encouraged. The removal of boundary treatments to accommodate parking should be resisted as this removes an attribute of the Conservation Area that contributes to its significance.Inappropriate management such as this, can have a harmful impact on the appearance of the area. Approach to boundary treatments should be consistent in design and materials that are complimentary of the context of the Conservation Area. Inappropriate features such as close-boarded fences and galvanised steel railings can have a harmful impact on the appearance of the area. Approach to boundary treatments should be consistent in design and materials that are complimentary of the context of the Conservation Area.

The volume of traffic that flows through Thorpe-le-Soken has a detrimental effect on its appreciation as a rural village. An opportunity to improve parking provisions should be explored to preserve and enhance the experience of Thorpe-le-Soken as a rural village.

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Figure 71 Grade II listed Oaks Restaurant and The Old Bakehouse (list entry no. 1147697)

Figure 72 Tesco Express

Figure 73 Richard Bunton Jewellers

Figure 74 Opticians

Figure 75 Modern Shop Front

4.2 Shop Frontages

Thorpe-le-Soken has a busy village core which should be preserved and enhanced where possible. The wealth of historic buildings in this area provides many examples of interesting and attractive architecture which need continued robust protection, in order to better reveal the special interest of Thorpe-le-Soken. Shop fronts should be appropriate to the age of the building in and the wider historic street design, scale and materials. They should retain original features as much as possible, should not detract from the special interest of the building and should preserve and enhance the overall street scene. In addition to shop frontages, consideration should also be given to signs and advertisements on all elevations of buildings. Although many of the historic shop frontages in the area have been lost, and many have since been converted to residential use, the maintenance of historic former commercial frontages is important. Further deterioration risks the total loss architectural details which give them their character.

There are several modern and inappropriate signs within the Conservation Area which are considered to have a negative visual impact. The use of modern materials such as plastic and glossy aluminium can detract from the character of the historic street, and internally illuminated signage is incongruous. Shop frontages that are sympathetic with the host building will strengthen the character and appearance of the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area.

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4.3 Loss of Architectural Details

Many buildings within the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area have retained their historic architectural features which are important to both the significance of the idividual buldings and area. However, some buildings have lost their original windows and doors many having been replaced with uPVC which do no replicate the fine detailing and craftmanship of historic timber windows and doors. The replacement of traditional timber windows with modern plastic alternatives is considered wholly unacceptable. In order to enhance and preserve the historic and architectural character of the Conservation Area timber windows should be retained and where possible reinstated. Within Thorpe Hall, the structures will need to be carefully maintained as further deterioration could result in the loss of features that are significant to the Park and Garden.

4.4 Unsympathetic additions

There are several examples in the Conservation Area where satellite dishes have been added to front elevations. The addition of satellite dishes to the front of the properties within the Conservation Area is considered inappropriate. This modern clutter detracts from the street scene and the architectural merit of buildings.

The addition of solar panels to the front pitches of properties within the Conservation Area is inappropriate and should be resisted. An Article 4 Direction would be required to remove permitted development rights. Solar panels have a negative visual impact on the street scene and adversely alter the appearance of the buildings.

Rooflights are an incongruous addition to the Conservation Area and are typically unacceptable addition to the front pitches of listed buildings. The insertion of rooflights may be acceptable on more modern developments, however, they should not be visible from the public domain or from neighbouring properties within the Conservation Area. They should also be small and low profile.

Figure 76 Loss of Architectural Details

Figure 77 Unsympathetic Additions - satellite dishes

© Place Services 2023

Figure 78 Examples of inappropriate Solar Panels and Rooflights

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4.5 Inappropriate Modern Development

Modern Development

The majority of modern development within the Conservation Area makes a neutral contribution that neither harms nor enhances the character and appearance of the area. However, there are some modern developments that are inappropriate to the Conservation Area.

The recent housing development on the north side of the High Street at Snowdrop Cottage, Heather Cottage and Primrose Cottage are inappropriate and unsympathetic. The facade of the dwellings is at odds with the other High Street properties within the Conservation Area and their form and appearance does not relate to the qualities and characteristics of the area. The inconsistent design of the front elevations appears clumsy and the overall appearance conflicts with the character of the area. The form of the roof, with its half-hipped ends and heavy dormers is also inappropriate. As a result, this development is intrusive to the Conservation Area and has a negative impact on its character.

Figure 79 Modern development along the High Street

Division of Land

There are several cases within the Conservation Area where the plots of historic and listed buildings have been subdivided and developed with modern dwellings. Most notably at Hawthorns, a Grade II listed eighteenth century timber framed property (list entry no: 1112109). This is considered inappropriate, land plots and curtilages are a key indication of an area's development, by dividing historic plots it will dilute the special interest and have a detrimental impact on the context of the Conservation Area's development. Not only does the division of historic plots diminish the historical integrity of the property, it can also have an adverse effect on the setting of the individual heritage asset.

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4.6 Access and Integration

Thorpe-le-Soken is compact and easily accessible via the two main thoroughfares; the B1033 travelling east to west and the B1414 travelling north to south. Thorpe-le-Soken is clearly defined by the transition from open land to residential settlement which leads to the village core. This clear distinction between farmland and settlement is important to Thorpe-le-Soken being read as an isolated settlement. The village is well sign posted when entering the village which marks the boundary. Consideration should be given to the potential benefits of appropriately located and well-designed interpretation boards which are standardised across the Conservation Area.

A heritage trail around the village, Thorpe Hall Park and Garden and the surrounding area could improve access to and awareness of the historic origins of Thorpe-le-Soken. There is an oppurtunity for footpaths into Thorpe Hall Park and Garden to be better sign posted.

The publication of guidance to inform building owners and residents within Thorpe-le-Soken of the Conservation Area status and the effects of the designation should be considered, this could be achieved by a bespoke leaflet.

4.7 Neutral Contributors

A significant proportion of buildings make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

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 a characteristic colour palette, and preventing loss of architectural form and features, would enhance these buildings. Similar interventions to the more modern neutral buildings could help to further 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, particularly within the modern development.

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Figure 80 Opportunities to Enhance the Public Realm

4.8 Public Realm

There are key areas of public space in the Thorpe-le-Soken; areas around community notice boards, Thorpe-le-Soken sign, entrance to St Michael's Church and the Thorpe-le-Soken War Memorial. These are affected by traffic and car parking which detracts from the rural context of the village.

Street Furniture (Lampposts, benches, signage, bins, bike stands, bollards etc.)

There are various examples of street furniture within the Conservation Area including bins, signs, lampposts, benches, post boxes, railings etc. There is some inconsistency in design of the street furniture which does not respect local character**.** For example, lampposts, planting beds, bins and some railings are modern in appearance and do not respond to the aesthetic context of the Conservation Area. There should be a consistent approach in the design of the street furniture to provide a more unified appearance, this will ensure they integrate well to the character of the area. Road signs in the Conservation Area are minimal and generally unobtrusive. However, the traffic islands at the east end of the Conservation Area and some public footpath signs are in a state of disrepair; their maintenance would enhance the overall appearance of the Conservation Area. Special attention should be given to the maintenance of the street furniture in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

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There are some good examples of street furniture within the Conservation Area that are traditional in their design and respond well to local character. These include, for example, traditional postboxes, the kissing gates near the Church (Figure 82) and the Thorpe-le-Soken community notice board and Village sign (Figure 81). There is an opportunity to follow these good examples and consideration should be given to the gradual replacement of poor quality street furniture. This will work to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Hard Landscaping

There are various treatments of hardstanding throughout the Conservation Area. The High Street retains a generally consistent approach to private driveways and pavements which ensure that the more urban character is retained and exclusive to the village core.

The Crescent, Vicarage Lane, Mill Lane and Hall Lane should maintain a softer landscaping approach as they are defined by a more rural character as lanes that lead out of the Conservation Area to the surrounding open land.

Figure 81 Thorpe-le-Soken community notice board located opposite entrance to the Church.

There has been some loss of front gardens by way of hard landscaping which is considered to detract from the collective appearance of the lanes. Extensive hardstanding of these lanes would be inappropriate and not adhere to their more rural context. These lanes should maintain open grass frontages, hedges and softer landscaping to uphold the distinctive difference in character from the more urban High Street.

Figure 82 Kissing gate along the footpath entrance to the Church

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Figure 83 Thorpe-Le-Soken Village Sign

Figure 84 Entrance to St Michael's Church

Community Areas

There is an opportunity to enhance the communal spaces in the Conservation Area, particularly the areas around the Thorpe-le-Soken sign, the community notice board and entrance to the church.

The pavements are wider in these areas with buildings set back providing a focal point for community activity. These areas should be enhanced through a consistent approach in material and maintenance of hardstanding and street furniture as well as a discouragement of car parking.

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5. Management Proposals

As outlined in the previous chapter, there are a wide range of issues facing the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This Chapter seeks to recommend management proposals which address these issues in both the short and long term.

5.1 Positive Management: Short Term

The first set of 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

The significance of Thorpe-le-Soken lies in the preservation of built heritage which has survived, in some cases, complex growth and regeneration. As such many of the buildings which are not listed also contribute positively to the significance and special interest of the area. Thorpe-le-Soken would benefit from the adoption and maintenance of a comprehensive Local List in order to recognise buildings of local architectural or historic interest and better preserve its historic environment.

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. Local Lists can be beneficial in ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of historic buildings that contribute to the character of the settlements. The exercise of creating a Local List will 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

Shop Frontages

While there are some shopfronts that are in keeping with the Conservation Area's character, there is substantial scope for improvement to shop frontages to enhance the character and appearance of the historic streetscape.

There is potential to raise awareness of the importance of these shopfronts and the contribution they make to the special interest of Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area through the production of information leaflets or web pages which provide guidance for shop owners on upkeep and maintenance of historic frontages. Article 4 Directions could also be used to prevent loss of historic fabric to shop frontages.

Vacant shop units can be enhanced creatively at a low cost and should be considered for improvement. This could include public art or information on the area.

Figure 85 Shop Frontages

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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

Twentieth Century Premises

There are some twentieth century developments which make a neutral or negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area. There is scope to enhance these sites and buildings through a considered design approach across Thorpe-le-Soken's Conservation Area which can guide future improvements. Should opportunities for redevelopment arise in the future, high quality design should be pursued and encouraged through design guidance.

General Maintenance: Public Realm

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 within character areas to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced. Historic elements of street furniture, for example the Thorpe-le-Soken Village sign, the kissing gates around the church and postboxes, will need to be maintained if they are to survive.

Figure 86 Modern development that does not reflect form, design or material of the Conservation Area

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Public Realm and Highways: Short-term

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 and rationalise existing street furniture.

Whilst replacing all inappropriate street furniture is an optimum solution, it is acknowledged that this is an expensive project to undertake. There are numerous other short-term solutions to this problem. 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 immediate 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, trees or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development

Figure 87 Unsympathetic street lighting

Figure 88 Signage and bin in poor condition

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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* (March 2015). Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated nor supported.

Tree Management

In line with Tendring 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, may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks written notice has been given to the Council.

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

There are some opportunities within Thorpe-le-Soken and its setting for development which makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. To date there has been a lack of high-quality modern architecture which respects the local character. 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.

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.

Tendring 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 it's appropriate to a conservation area.
- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

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Neutral Elements

As discussed, the dilution of positive buildings, amongst those which are neutral, leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

Tendring District Council should not allow for the quality of design to be 'averaged down' by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment. Officers should, where possible seek schemes which enhance the built environment and not allow previous poor-quality schemes to become precedents.

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 and repair does not become 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 Thorpe-le-Soken'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 awareness. This would be an effective way to improve the awareness and re-establish the identity of Thorpe-le-Soken as a historic settlement.

5.2 Positive Management: Longer Term

The second set of proposals are also focussed around positive management but either take longer to implement or are better suited to a longer time frame.

Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary has been revised 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 regularly 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 Character Appraisal and Management Plan should be reviewed regularly to monitor any change to the character of the area and to ensure the proposals within the Management Plan are still relevant to and are able to address the area's issues and opportunities.

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Article 4 Directions

Article 4 Directions are additional planning controls which can be introduced by a Local Planning Authority to revoke certain Permitted Development Rights. Permitted Development Rights allow building owners to carry out certain works to their properties without the need for planning permission and are set out within the General Permitted Development Order.

Article 4 Directions served on properties within the Conservation Area would introduce the need to apply for planning permission for certain works and this would allow the Council to better preserve and enhance the area by ensuring high quality design and use of traditional materials.

An Article 4 Direction removing Permitted Development Rights for alterations to their front elevations, windows, doors, front boundary treatments and front gardens could help to preserve the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. Unsympathetic alterations and additions to buildings throughout the Conservation Area is an issue which detracts from its character and appearance. A blanket Article 4 Direction covering the entire Conservation Area could remove Permitted Development Rights for replacement windows and doors and alterations to front boundary treatments. This would provide some control over the quality and design of alterations to dwellings, better preserving and, where possible, enhancing the area.

5.3 Funding Opportunities

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

National Heritage Lottery Fund

The National 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 NHLF schemes Tendring District Council should consult their appointed Heritage Specialist.

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 Thorpe-le-Soken. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site-specific improvements.

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is a programme run by Historic England to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. As the name suggests, the scheme forms partnerships with local authorities (along with any additional funding partners) to facilitate the regeneration of an area through the conservation of its built heritage. The scheme makes funds available to individuals to enable them to carry out repairs or improvement works to their property to enhance the area. This would be suitable to preserve and enhance either the shop frontages or the architectural detailing.

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Figure 89 Sympathetic example of boundary treatment and hard landscaping alongside the churchyard

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6. Appendices

6.1 Bibliography

Publications

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Tendring District Council and Essex County Council, Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation, 2008

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Archives

Essex Record Office (ERO)

- The Abbey dating to the sixteenth century (ECC Archives I/Mb 354/2/1)
- Photograph of Mitchell's Cash Stores, Thorpe-le-Soken now 'Tesco' (ERO I/Mb 354/1/3)
- Photograph of Thorpe Hall, Thorpe-le-Soken (ERO IMb 354-1-4)

Essex Historic Environment Record

Webpage

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/conservation-areas-at-risk/

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search?clearresults=true

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000521

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6.2 Legislation, 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) DLUGH	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2014) DLUGH	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets	
National Guidance	Historic England (2019) Statements of Heritage Significance Advice Note 12	
Local Policy	Tendring District Local Plan 2013 - 2033 and Beyond	Policy SPL 3 - Sustainable Design Policy PP 8 - Tourism Policy PPL 3 - The Rural Landscape Policy PPL 7 - Archaeology Policy PPL 8 - Conservation Areas Policy PPL 9 - Listed Buildings Policy PPL 10 - Renewable energy generation and energy efficiency

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6.3 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. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
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.

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