

# Bulmer Conservation Area Appraisal

Prepared for Braintree  
District Council



February 2009

## Revision Schedule

### Bulmer Conservation Area Appraisal: Final Report March 2009

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 What is a conservation area?

- 1.1.1 Conservation areas are designated in recognition of the 'special architectural and historic interest' of an area, and the desirability of preserving or enhancing that interest. The planning process recognises that the benefit derived from areas with architectural and historic interest depends on more than the preservation of individual buildings of importance, and that a mix of factors, including green spaces, relationship of buildings to the street, commercial activity, street furniture and traffic flow, all impact on the perception of an area.
- 1.1.2 The Bulmer Conservation Area (figure 1, appendix 1) was designated on the 9 November 1989 by Braintree District Council in recognition of the special architectural and historic interest of the area. The Conservation Area is clustered around the medieval church. Designation of a conservation area is not intended to prevent new development in the area, but introduces an additional level of control for the quality of design through the planning process. This should be undertaken in accordance with policies for the built environment set out in the Braintree District Local Plan Review (July 2005).
- 1.1.3 Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, paragraph 4.1 places the emphasis on preserving or enhancing the 'character' of the designated area and, therefore, encompasses the entire area, rather than individual buildings. The spatial arrangement of buildings and open spaces, including green spaces, are of equal importance to the character of the designated area. Special consideration is also given to the context or 'setting' of the site, including views into, and out of it.

## 1.2 Background to Appraisal

- 1.2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Authorities to designate areas of special architectural or historic interest. Section 69(2) of the Act places a duty on the Council to review and appraise its conservation areas on a regular basis. This obligation is monitored through a series of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI 219a, b and c). Although BVPI 219c was removed recently, there remains a requirement for Councils to undertake Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in order to monitor change and inform decision making.
- 1.2.2 This Appraisal has been prepared in accordance with English Heritage guidance on conservation areas contained within Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2006) and Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2006), and in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994 as amended 2007) (PPG15).
- 1.2.3 A combination of on site analysis and documentary research has been undertaken to provide an assessment of:
- existing activity and prevailing or former uses, and their influence on the Conservation Area and its buildings;

- the architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and the contribution that these make to the Conservation Area;
- local building details and materials, and
- the quality of the public realm and the contribution made to the Conservation Area by green spaces.

1.2.4 Guidance will also be provided on the future management of the Conservation Area through the adoption of a management strategy, with specific reference to:

- the extent of intrusion, damage of individual elements and the presence of neutral areas;
- the general condition of the Conservation Area and problems, pressures and scope for change within it; and
- the scope for boundary changes to the Conservation Area.

1.2.5 It is intended that this Appraisal will be used by the Council as guidance for assessing development proposals that affect the area and by residents, developers and the public to understand its significance in order that its special interest and character will be preserved and enhanced for future generations. It is not intended to be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

## 1.3 Planning Policy Context

1.3.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to preserve and enhance a conservation area, through the planning system. Within a conservation area, additional protection is afforded to unlisted buildings and trees, allowing greater control over the impact of development. The national, regional and local policy regarding conservation areas is detailed below.

### National Policy

1.3.2 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Braintree District Council to designate as conservation areas any “*areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. Section 71 of the Act imposes a duty on the Council to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas with Section 72 requiring that “*special attention shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This requirement extends to all powers under the Planning Acts, not only those which relate directly to historic buildings*” as set out in PPG15, paragraph 4.14.

1.3.3 PPG15 paragraph 4.1 states that conservation area designation “*provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of character and appearance that define an area’s special interest*” and enables the application of conservation policies for a particular neighbourhood or area.

1.3.4 PPG15, paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4, emphasise the importance of considering the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, in identifying conservation areas.

1.3.5 PPG15, paragraph 4.3, states that the Council “*should seek to establish consistent local standards for their designations and should periodically review existing conservation areas and their boundaries against those standards*”. Designations should be negated “*where an areas or part of an area is no longer considered to possess the special interest which led to its original designation*”.

### Regional Policy

1.3.6 The East of England Plan, Policy ENV6: The Historic Environment and paragraph 8.20, advocate that local planning authorities should “*identify, protect and conserve, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment of the region*”, and conservation areas and listed buildings, their settings, and significant designed landscapes are considered of particular significance within the region.

### Local Policy

1.3.7 A number of local policies are applicable to the Conservation Area under the Braintree District Local Plan Review (July 2005) (Local Plan). Policy RLP 95 states that:

*“The Council will preserve, and encourage the enhancement of, the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas and their settings, including the buildings, open spaces and areas, landscape and historic features and views into and within the constituent parts of designated areas. Built or other development, within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and affecting its setting, will only be permitted provided that:*

*(a) The proposal does not detract from the character, appearance and essential features of the Conservation Area;*

*(b) Any new development is situated in harmony with the existing street scene and building line, and is sympathetic in size, scale and proportions with its surroundings;*

*(c) Architectural details on buildings of value are retained;*

*(d) Building materials are authentic and complementary to the building’s character.”*

1.3.8 Local Plan Proposals Map identifies the following designations within Bulmer Conservation Area:

- Special Landscape Area;
- Coe’s Meadow as an area of informal recreation; and
- St. Andrew’s Church and its curtilage as a Cemetery/Churchyard.

1.3.9 Local Plan Policy RLP 79 states that:

*“development likely to cause permanent loss or damage to the traditional rural qualities of the countryside, or its essential landscape character will be refused, especially in Special Landscape Areas...Any development that is permitted in Special Landscape Areas will be*

*expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting and layout with materials appropriate to the character of the area, with appropriate landscaping. The conservation and maintenance of features important to the local landscape such as trees, hedges, copses, woodlands and ponds will be encouraged. Planning obligations will be sought to secure the management of new landscape areas”.*

1.3.10 Local Plan Policy RLP 136 states that:

*“development that would result in the loss, or reduction of formal recreation sites (that is, playing fields and pitches and recreational buildings) allocated on the Proposals Map will not be permitted unless:*

- the development is for buildings ancillary to open space; or for non-commercial community uses, or*
- the owner of the site demonstrates that they are required to move in order to upgrade their facilities. In this case, alternative open space will be provided, which is of an equivalent, or improved facility and where it is readily accessible to the catchment population of the existing site and there is no resulting loss of visual amenity.”*

1.3.11 Local Plan Policy RLP 4 aims to prevent ‘town cramming’ and applies to formal and informal space, and cemeteries/churchyards states that:

*“within Village Envelopes and Town Development Boundaries development on open areas, which are important visually, which contribute to the character of the settlement, or which are used for recreational, social, or community purposes or which are of importance to nature conservation will not be permitted.”*

## 1.4 Summary of Special Interest

1.4.1 The Bulmer Conservation Area is a cluster of historic development grouped around St. Andrew’s Church which retains open meadows within the heart of the village in a rural setting. Originating as a dispersed settlement with two/three farms in the late medieval period the village has incrementally developed along the cross roads at the centre of the village.

1.4.2 Set back from the street behind hedges and walls, buildings of most periods are represented. Building on Coe’s Meadow and Church Meadow has mostly been resisted. The relationship between the Church and its surrounding landscape has largely been preserved.

## 2 Assessing Special Interest

### 2.1 Location and Setting

#### Location

- 2.1.1 Located within the north of the county of Essex close to the border with Suffolk, Bulmer is situated 3 miles south west of Sudbury and 7 miles north east of Halstead. It lies to the west of the A131 road (a former turnpike), which runs between Sudbury and Halstead.
- 2.1.2 The geology formed after the most recent ice age is characterised by thick deposits of boulder clays, made fertile by chalk, known as Essex Till (Bettley & Pevsner, 2007). This means that there is little local building stone; flint, clunch and septaria are generally reserved for the local churches with the predominant building materials being brick and timber with plaster. The Essex Till is however, suitable for brick making; a brick works has stood on the site of the Bulmer Brick and Tile Company, on the Hedingham Road (B1058) to the south west of Bulmer, since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.1.3 A Landscape Character Assessment was produced in 2006 for the Braintree District. Bulmer lies within the "Wickham Farmland Plateau" character area - an area characterised by rolling hills and valleys, with land used for agriculture. Bulmer's St. Andrew's Church sits on top of a hill creating a significant landmark within the wider landscape, particularly from the south west.
- 2.1.4 Land outside of the Conservation Area boundary, but including part of the garden of The Dower House and Church Meadow, is designated a Special Landscape Area; where the character of the area is also protected.
- 2.1.5 The parish of Bulmer has a population of 568 (2001 Census). The age range of the population indicates a high number of adults between 30 and 59 with most children under the age of 7. The population in 1801 was 378, in 1851, 599 and in 1901, 504 (Victoria County History of Essex vol. ii pp.177-178).
- 2.1.6 In the Church lies a monument to Robert and Frances Mary Andrews, former occupants of Auberries, a local manor. On the occasion of their marriage circa 1750, Thomas Gainsborough, of neighbouring Sudbury, painted Mr & Mrs Andrews at their property, with the Sudbury landscape in the background.



## Setting

- 2.1.7 There are four approaches into Bulmer. Approaching from the south west, Bulmer Street is flanked partly by a high hedge line which prevents direct views into the Conservation Area. However, there are clear views out into the surrounding landscape, and to St Andrew's Church, at the highest point of the Conservation Area (fig. 2).



**Figure 2 Distant view of St Andrew's Church.**

- 2.1.8 Approaching Bulmer from the south along, Church Road, views of the Conservation Area are restricted by trees and thick hedge lining the road. Figure 3 shows Church Road looking south from the junction with The Street.



**Figure 3 shows Church Road looking south.**

- 2.1.9 The approach from Sudbury is up hill into the village and there are clear views down on to Sudbury, which is set in the Stour river valley. Sudbury Road has a strong hedge line, which with the flint boundary wall of The Old Vicarage creates a sense of enclosure. The approach

along Sudbury Road, from the north east, runs to the crossroads with views into the Conservation Area along The Street (fig. 4).



**Figure 4 View looking west along The Street.**

- 2.1.10 Travelling into Bulmer along Smeetham Hall Lane, from the north, the area is characterised by large properties and a defined edge to road by hedgerows and flint and brick walls (fig. 4 and 5). This restricts views into the Conservation Area and prevents views out to the surrounding landscape. Views out from the Conservation Area into the surrounding landscape are also limited.



**Figure 5 Wall to the Old Vicarage.**

## 2.2 Historic Development and Archaeology

- 2.2.1 There are a number of crop marks consisting of linear or rectangular features and field boundaries of unidentified age to the north east and south west of the settlement. Bulmer lies

close to the Roman Road that ran between Chelmsford to Ixworth in Suffolk, a Roman Villa was present at Hill Farm (SMR Number – 13859) and Roman bricks are present in the church, suggesting that there has been settlement in this area for at least 2000 years. The Church is the oldest structure standing in the current settlement, which is said to date from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Little physical evidence of this date remains, with restoration and alteration in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- 2.2.2 By medieval times it is likely that the street pattern is already established, in the cross formation at the centre of the village. Little physical evidence of a medieval village settlement exists on the ground. There is documentary evidence (Public Records Office) that land within the parish was changing ownership during this time. However, the earliest building appears to be that of the 16<sup>th</sup> century which is represented by the chimney of the Old Vicarage, although little is known of the original form of the building. Extension and alteration of the Church during the medieval period suggests that there is a significant degree of wealth created by agriculture in and around the parish.
- 2.2.3 By the 17<sup>th</sup> century a number of farms and small holdings have been built, with the properties fronting the street including the houses now divided to form Langley Cottage and Warlin, Clematis and Tintops, Griggs Farmhouse and barn (Suffolk Hall) and Clement Cottage. These are small vernacular timber frame buildings under steeply pitched tile or thatched roofs. Mostly of one storey with attics, Griggs Farmhouse is the exception. It is built on a grander scale of two storeys. Typically windows in buildings of this date are casement windows; Griggs has a 20<sup>th</sup> century version of these. The remaining buildings of this date have all lost their original windows and are now mostly horizontal sliding sashes, which became popular from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. All of these buildings have been altered over the years, but retaining their vernacular qualities.
- 2.2.4 The 18<sup>th</sup> sees little building within the village. The vernacular The Cottage with its quirky roof formed by the later addition of tiles to the lower section of the thatched roof and Cherwells with its mix of polite and vernacular architecture (pitched tile catslide roof, symmetry (right hand bay added later) and sash windows) are both of this date.
- 2.2.5 The 19<sup>th</sup> sees the building of an independent chapel on The Street, showing a changing community.
- 2.2.6 The 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century sees the development of a number of small cottages and houses for rent by land owners, in many cases for their own workers. Mostly these are timber framed and rendered although a number are flint, under tiles or slate pitched roofs. Most of the windows are casements.
- 2.2.7 This period also sees the current Blackbirds House built, although there was an older building on the site. It is a typical polite Regency style rendered building with horizontal sliding sashes under a low pitched slate roof. It maintains its external louvre shutters but has had replacement window in a number of openings. The Dower House also maintains its external shutters, but is rather grander in style with its parapet and cornice on its brick elevations. The Old Vicarage is altered with sash windows and a parapet installed. How much of the original building remains is unknown.

- 2.2.8 Modern infill development at Vicars Orchard, Church Road, St Andrew's Rise, Smeetham Hall Lane and southern side of The Street is the single biggest alteration to the village of Bulmer in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Typically of one or two stories, these properties are brick built, with large picture windows, under concrete tiled roofs. Typically these properties are built on cul-de-sacs.
- 2.2.9 Generally little modern alteration has happened to the exterior of the historic properties in the Conservation Area, which can be seen from the street. The merging of cottages or subdivision of houses has been common in the village, but little external 20<sup>th</sup> century change is visible to the buildings' fabric. Where there have been alterations these have mostly been in the form of sympathetic small scale extensions or garages or alterations to boundary treatments that are associated with the change of use from commercial or agricultural to residential use. Many of these alterations are not visible from the street due to the landscaped gardens of the properties.

## 2.3 Spatial Analysis

- 2.3.1 A feature of the northern Essex and Suffolk landscape is the dispersal of settlements, clustered around either a green area ('Tye') or the parish church. The parish of Bulmer is no exception, historically composed of a number of manors and with settlement dispersed around the parish. The settlements of Bulmer and Bulmer Tye (on the A131) have developed from this dispersed settlement pattern.
- 2.3.2 Two acres of land around the St. Andrew's Church were known to have been given with the living of the Church. Although development was built on Vicars Orchard in the 1970's little else has changed in over 100 years, with the important relationship of the Church and the landscape maintained. Church Meadow to the south and Coe's Meadow (fig. 6) to the north of the Church open green spaces form important accessible open recreation space for the village and afford views of the Church, although in places filtered through trees.



Figure 6 Coe's Meadow.

- 2.3.3 Most of the village is accessed from four streets, with only mid 20<sup>th</sup> century development forming cul-de-sac development. Development is clustered around the church meadows and The Street.

## 2.4 Character Analysis

### General

- 2.4.1 The streets of Bulmer are characterised by narrow roads with grass verges, lined with hedges and/or low built masonry walls. The buildings are generally set back from the street, with only the former farm buildings at Brickwall Farm, The Old Chapel and Blackbirds House projecting forward of the building line (fig. 7).



**Figure 7 Looking east along The Street with the Old Chapel in the foreground and Blackbird House in the middle distance.**

- 2.4.2 Buildings typically are constructed of timber and plaster (fig. 8) with later buildings in brick, under thatch, tile or slate. The Church is constructed of flint and pebble rubble with dressings of limestone and clunch under plain tiles. Flint and brick is a feature of many of the garden and other boundary walls.
- 2.4.3 Buildings which are of positive or negative character, along with listed buildings, positive and negative views, and positive and negative boundaries are identified on the Townscape Analysis Map in Appendix 2.



**Figure 8 The Cottage.**

- 2.4.4 The village is now predominantly residential, with the Cock and Blackbird public house and congregational chapel converted and the school demolished and replaced by dwellings. A post office remains at the western end of The Street and the village hall to the south of the Conservation Area, both lie outside of the boundary. The community use of the Church and Coe's Meadow remain, with the former still in ecclesiastical use and the latter used for informal recreation.

### **The Street**

- 2.4.5 The Street is characterised by development fronting the road but set back from it, behind hedges and masonry walls. A boarded fences also exist on the road boundary, which are painted a variety of shades of brown, which detract from the character of the Conservation Area. Where the boundary treatment is tall, a sense of enclosure is established (fig. 4). Where these are lower, views of the buildings, and occasional glimpses of the rolling countryside beyond can be seen (fig. 9). The balance of enclosure with the gaps between the buildings forms an important part of the Conservation Area.



**Figure 9 View looking east along The Street.**

- 2.4.6 Grigg's Farm (fig. 10) built in the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> Century comprised one of the first buildings established close to the Church that are still in existence. The two storey farmhouse was built as a substantial timber framed house with associated farm buildings (Suffolk Hall) and is a grade II Listed Building. This group of buildings forms the most important group within The Street.



**Figure 10 Grigg's Farm House.**

- 2.4.7 Clement Cottage (fig. 11) also dates from this period, and is also grade II listed. It is one and a half storeys, plastered under a thatch roof. The curved roof black corrugated metal and timber boarded former traction-engine shed and threshing machine workshop (fig. 12) appears on the 1923 Ordinance Survey Map and was used at one time by the Home Guard during World War II for practice (Cooper 1994). It is the only one of its kind in the vicinity and maintains its original form and association with Clement Cottage.



**Figure 11 Clement Cottage.**



**Figure 12 Clement Cottage Barn**

2.4.8 Langley Cottage, Warlin (fig. 13), Clematis and Tintops (fig. 14) also date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and are timber framed and rendered under thatched roofs. The thatch around Clematis' and Tintops' dormers, has been significantly altered, probably as the result of the application of a tin roof circa 1900. The building was listed in 1962 when this tin roof was still intact.





**Figure 13 Warlin.**



**Figure 14 Clemetis and Tintops.**

2.4.9 During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century a number of further cottages were built, most likely for farm workers, although silk weaving formed a strong part of the wider economy. The large windows of this building type do not feature/survive in the Conservation Area. The Cottage, Cherwells (fig. 15), Charlton Cottage (fig. 16), Flint Cottages, Chapel Cottages and Brickwall Cottages are all from this period. Swain's Cottage is also of this period, but lies outside of the Conservation Area boundary.



**Figure 15 Cherwells.**



**Figure 16 Charlton Cottage.**

2.4.10 The former congregational chapel (fig. 17), now converted to residential use, is brick built with polychromatic brick and stone detailing around the window and door openings. It sits forward of the general building line.



**Figure 17 The Old Chapel.**

- 2.4.11 Blackbirds House (fig. 18), the former Cock and Blackbird Public House, listed grade II, dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The current rendered and slated building is likely to contain remnants of an older structure as a publican, John Paine, is registered at this address in 1769.



**Figure 18 Blackbirds House.**

- 2.4.12 The Dower House (fig 19), set in its own large landscaped gardens and was, in 1897, known as Bulmer Lodge. It was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in red brick under a plain tile roof. The stables were converted c.1997 to form a separate dwelling. The boundary hedge and wall to The Street form an important feature in this part of the Conservation Area.



**Figure 19 The Dower House.**

- 2.4.13 The construction of modern timber framed and rendered homes on the northern side of The Street, Inglefield (fig 20) and the property between Belchamp Brook House and Cornfields was undertaken in between the First and Second World War.



**Figure 20 Inglefield.**

- 2.4.14 The 1970s saw an expansion of the village with the building of a significant number of buildings within the setting of the Conservation Area (although the Conservation Area was designated in 1989) on the former allotment gardens; the landscaping of these properties forms a backdrop to the Conservation Area.
- 2.4.15 The rendered buildings within and adjacent to the Conservation Area are decorated in a range of pale colourwashes of natural creams and pinks which harmonise with the traditional white and red brick buildings.

## Sudbury Road and Smeetham Hall Lane

- 2.4.16 The Old Vicarage (fig. 21) and Blackhouse Farm form this corner of the Conservation Area, hidden behind brick walls and hedges only the upper parts of these buildings are clearly visible, or glimpses through gaps. The Old Vicarage, built early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was known as the Laurels in 1897, and formed the Vicarage by 1923. It is listed grade II. The Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in 1911 states that The Laurels is ‘built round a 16<sup>th</sup> century chimney stack’, although the listed building description does not mention the chimney in detail.
- 2.4.17 A number of new and recently converted buildings are set behind high flint and brick walls to the rear of the Old Vicarage and Blackhouse Farm. The wall to the street forms an important positive boundary to Smeetham Hall Lane.



**Figure 21 The Old Vicarage.**

## Church Road

- 2.4.18 Church Road is characterised by field hedges to the eastern side of the road, and to Coe’s Meadow and to Church Meadow. The 1970s development of Bonbusk, Pentland, The Robins, Lutham and Linwood saw the demolition of the school and Dairy Farm. These houses are of two storeys, built in brick and render under tiled roofs.
- 2.4.19 Vicar’s Orchard (fig. 22) was built in the 1970s, on the Orchard formerly owned by the Church. These are single storey red brick and render properties under a tiled roof, which have a neutral/negative impact on the Conservation Area.



**Figure 22 Vicars Orchard viewed from the churchyard.**

- 2.4.20 The 19<sup>th</sup> century Laundry Cottage (figure 23) is the only building of townscape importance on this road. It is set a significant distance from the road and constructed of red brick under a slate roof and was renovated from a derelict condition in 1990s, when a number of additions were made.



**Figure 23 Laundry Cottage.**

### Church Environs

- 2.4.21 The area around the church is broadly open in nature with a small number of buildings dotted within it. The grade I listed 12<sup>th</sup> century Church forms the hub of the Conservation Area, dominating it by height and position on top of the hill (fig. 24). The historic churchyard enclosure has been retained, although the red brick boundary treatment is no more than 200 years old. The pollarded avenue of trees (fig. 25) linking the Church to The Street, across Coe's Meadow, is shown on the 1897 map. These trees are protected under a tree preservation order, and form a key landmark.



**Figure 24 St Andrew's Church.**



**Figure 25 The avenue of trees on Coe's Meadow.**

2.4.22 The openness of the setting of the Church is significant to the character of the Conservation Area. Whilst some views of the Church are glimpsed between buildings or trees, there are clear views from the north and south. The impact of the Vicars Orchard development on the Conservation Area is a little shielded by the growth of vegetation on the Coe's Meadow and churchyard boundaries.

2.4.23 Church Cottage and Church Meadow House (fig. 26) are set within Church Meadow, although their character and location mean that the openness of the Meadow remains. The buildings date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and are shown on the 1897 map. These are the only buildings in

the Conservation Area which combine brick on the ground floor with a visible timber frame and render on the upper floor.



**Figure 26 Church Meadow House.**

## 2.5 Local Materials

- 2.5.1 Flint was used in early buildings, such as the Church, as a status symbol. It is difficult to use in construction and in many cases is used with other materials to form openings and corners, which take structural stress. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century flint was once again used as a vernacular material and is seen mostly on cottages which were built by the land owner for their workers, such as Flint Cottage.
- 2.5.2 In addition to flint, clunch is found within the local soils. This material is used as structural stone in the Church.
- 2.5.3 The buildings of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century are generally timber framed, due to the shortage of local stone and high cost of brick production at that date. Many timber frames were designed to perform structurally and were not meant to be uncovered as decorative features, such as at Griggs Farmhouse. These timbers would normally have been rendered over with plaster in Bulmer.
- 2.5.4 Decorative moulded plaster, which is attached to the exterior of a building, known as parget, is a feature of parts of Essex and Suffolk. Original examples date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, examples in Bulmer's Conservation Area are limited to modern work on Chapel Cottages (fig. 26), Warlin, Cornfields and Larkfield.





**Figure 27 Parget detail on Chapel Cottages.**

- 2.5.5 Brick was in use in Suffolk and Essex as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, although it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it became widely used for construction of buildings. The use of brick is limited to The Dower House and the Old Chapel and structural sections of other buildings until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Brick building becomes common in Bulmer from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## 3 Community Involvement

- 3.1.1 Braintree District Council wrote to parish councils, the general public and where available local history groups. Prior to the public consultation parish councils were contacted asking for details of local history or amenity groups who may have wished to be involved. All draft consultations were made available for download by the public on Braintree District Councils website.
- 3.1.2 The public consultation took place between 19th December 2008 and 16th January 2009.
- 3.1.3 In total 59 responses were received for Bulmer. Comments were analysed by Braintree District Council and where further advice, information or clarification was required the Council consulted Essex County Council Historic Buildings Section, Parish Councils and our consultants.
- 3.1.4 The Draft Conservation Area Appraisal was taken to Braintree District Local Committee for consideration on the 18th March 2009.

## 4 Suggested Boundary Changes

### 4.1 General

- 4.1.1 Current practice when designating conservation areas is to ensure that the conservation area boundaries follow established existing boundaries, and do not run along the centre of a road. It is also the case that the boundary should not create a 'string of beads' effect where development of neutral or negative character is excluded and positive areas are all included.
- 4.1.2 In the case of Bulmer many of the boundaries do not follow established features. The Special Landscape Area (SLA) meets the Conservation Area boundary in several places, which also affords local policy protection. To follow current good practice, where alterations to the boundary are proposed, the boundary of the SLA should also be revised through the appropriate process.

### 4.2 Exclusion

- 4.2.1 None.

### 4.3 Additions

#### **Blackhouse Farm**

- 4.3.1 The current eastern boundary along Sudbury Road cuts across the garden of Black House Farm. This boundary should encompass the garden.

#### **Church Environs**

- 4.3.2 The western boundary behind Church Cottage and Church Meadow House should be extended to include the rear property boundaries.
- 4.3.3 The western boundary which currently runs along the footpath should be moved to the field boundary.
- 4.3.4 Properties in Vicars Orchard and along Church Road should remain within the Conservation Area to preserve views of the Church and enable environmental enhancements to be undertaken in the future.

#### **The Street**

- 4.3.5 The northern boundary of the Conservation Area should follow the northern property boundaries of properties on the northern side of the road.

## 5 Management Proposals

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Management proposals set out a future plan of action for the preservation or enhancement of a conservation area. Many of the proposals are relevant across the Braintree District, but others are specific to the Bulmer Conservation Area.
- 5.1.2 Proposals may relate to matters of policy or control of development, or physical enhancement.

### 5.2 Summary of issues

- 5.2.1 The Conservation Area is suffering from a gradual erosion of its character through inappropriate boundary treatments, the streets and street furniture. In addition to this gradual erosion a number of developments have been built within the Conservation Area since its designation, which although these would have followed contemporary guidance, this has led to the erosion of the character of the Conservation Area.

### 5.3 Local Generic Guidance

#### Planning Policy

- 5.3.1 Current policies in the Braintree District Plan 2005 cover layout and design of development, preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, demolition in conservation areas, changes of use in conservation areas, environmental enhancement in conservation areas fascias and illuminated and non-illuminated signs in conservation areas, and shopfronts in conservation areas.
- 5.3.2 Braintree District Council is in the process of reviewing their forward plan, or local development framework (LDF). This new forward plan works from a strategic level down to the detailed policy level, each of these levels have a different name and varying amount of detail. Good design, conservation and heritage should be a central theme in the Core Strategy, Development Control Policies and Supplementary Planning Documents. More information on the current position and the process can be found on [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk).
- 5.3.3 The current Government guidance will be reviewed and a new Planning Policy Statement on the historic environment produced shortly. This will guide future policy formulation as well as development control. Detailed policies and management should cover colour of buildings, window and door replacement, boundary treatment, signage, hanging baskets, shopfronts, satellite dishes and trees in conservation areas and the placing and materials of street furniture.
- 5.3.4 New buildings and/or building alterations and additions will also need to be considered in detail. The Essex County Council's Design Guide addresses a number of relevant issues, but care must be taken to ensure that where this guidance is followed, the design is still appropriate for the particular local style of buildings, which varies from settlement to settlement.

## Historic Buildings

- 5.3.5 Many of the buildings within a conservation area will be historic, where traditional architectural detailing and breathable natural materials were used. These details and materials contribute to the overall feel of the area and the health of the buildings. A strategy which sets out Braintree's approach to the use and retention of traditional architectural details and materials should be developed. This strategy will ensure that the appropriate approach is taken to preserve not only the conservation area but may also be applied to listed buildings within the district.
- 5.3.6 Specialist advice is provided by Essex County Council, who has produced guidance on pargetting, limewashing, pointing with lime mortars, conservatories and renewal of timber window frames. However this needs to be backed up with supporting strategies to ensure their use. This is particularly important where buildings are in need of significant repair.
- 5.3.7 In addition to the retention of traditional materials, a strategy for buildings at risk should be developed. The County Council currently maintains the register for Essex of listed buildings within the Conservation Area which could be considered as 'buildings at risk' either because they are in poor repair, slowly decaying and either disused or underused. The situation needs to be monitored and a process put in place for dealing with problem buildings should they arise, leading to further prevention of decay.

## Restriction of Permitted Development Rights

- 5.3.8 'Article 4 Directions' enable the Council to ensure that minor alterations and development within the Conservation Area are carried out in an appropriate manner, through the planning process. Following changes to the planning system on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008, via an amendment to the General Permitted Development Order, a number of additional alterations may be made to dwellings without the need for planning permission (via 'permitted development rights').
- 5.3.9 These Rights may be removed following a strict procedure, which includes separate public consultation, the implementation of an Article 4(2) Direction means that a number of alterations and additions may be controlled. In these additional cases there is no fee to make the planning application.
- 5.3.10 It is recommended where it is identified that the character and appearance of the conservation area has been diminished through permitted development, that the following classes of permitted development rights for dwelling houses be removed from land within the Conservation Area, in the form of an Article 4(2) Direction, these are detailed in Appendix 3:
- Schedule 2, part 1, classes A to H;
  - Schedule 2, part 2, classes A and C; and,
  - Schedule 2, part 31, class B.

## 5.4 Management Plan

- 5.4.1 A management plan sets out steps to maintain and enhance the character of the Conservation Area, which are in addition to the local generic guidance suggested above.

## Review of the conservation area appraisal

- 5.4.2 Conservation area appraisals need to be reviewed from time to time. Policy changes can also mean that an appraisal requires updating. The conservation area appraisal should be reviewed when such changes take place, subject to available resources.

## Monitoring and enforcement

- 5.4.3 Under Section 215 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Braintree District Council can tackle sites or buildings which are untidy character or appearance and/or in poor repair may be tackled by. This allows the Council to improve the amenity of an area, including land or buildings within a conservation area. English Heritage has produced a good practice guide which demonstrates effective use of Section 215 Notices. These notices can be used to ensure sites and buildings are repaired and maintained.
- 5.4.4 Care needs to be taken with the approval of minor alterations and additions to buildings within the conservation area and with any new development; incremental change where not carefully considered can lead to alteration of the conservation area over time. Periodic monitoring for changes and regular photographing of the conservation area including individual buildings should be undertaken to monitor for incremental change. This should be undertaken no less than once every three years, and may form part of the conservation area appraisal process.
- 5.4.5 Periodic monitoring will alert Braintree District Council to unauthorised works and enable the relevant action to be taken.

## Environmental enhancement and maintenance

- 5.4.6 This section contains a number of recommendations for environmental enhancements in the conservation area.

### Boundary Treatments

- 5.4.7 A number of native vegetation hedges and trees exist in the conservation area, which form the boundary of many properties with the road. In other places low or medium height brick or brick and flint walls are common. However, the boundaries to Griggs Farm, the property between Belchamp Brook House and Cornfields, Swain's Croft, The Bungalow, St Jude's, The Dower House and the modern properties along Church Road are of inappropriate materials or non-existent, which detract from the character of the Conservation Area. In addition to this, the rear boundaries of which face the footpath between Bulmer Street and the Church impact negatively on the character of the Conservation Area. The brickwork boundary to Griggs Farm is in need of repair, although the replacement of the wall with a red brick and flint wall or with a native hedge would enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The closely boarded fences could be significantly improved with the growing of evergreen climbers over them or their replacement with post and rail fencing.
- 5.4.8 The replacement of the metal rail and concrete post boundary to the pond with timber post and rail fence would enhance the Conservation Area.

### Services

- 5.4.9 A number of electrical and telephone wires on telegraph poles are visible in the street, which detract from the character of the area. A programme of under-grounding of cabling should be considered.

### Traffic Management and Streets

- 5.4.10 A number of the streets within the Conservation Area are showing signs of wear and tear with eroded verges, poorly maintained kerbs and lack of maintenance of hedgerows.
- 5.4.11 The installation of a traditional kerb to stop the erosion of verges will create a hard edge to the roadside which would be alien to the existing natural edge. Reinstatement of the soft verge and a programme of public awareness to stop parking on the verge is likely to be sufficient to avoid further erosion. However, a further measure would be the installation of oak bollards (on sheer plates) at key locations, where erosion continues to prove an issue.
- 5.4.12 The driveway of Chelsworth has a detrimental effect on the character of the Conservation Area. The establishment of a palette of materials that would be suitable for use in the conservation area for driveways, parking areas and for the top dressing of paths and roads to reduce their impact on the character of the area is recommended.
- 5.4.13 The following items are recommended for the enhancement of the village:
- The removal extraneous signage poles;
  - Improvement of the verges around Coe's Meadow;
  - Replacement of the litter bins with ones made of timber;
  - Maintenance of the pond on the Street and on Coe's Meadow, to the benefit of local wildlife.

## 6 Useful Information

### Bibliography

Cooper A (1994) Heart of Our History: 500 Years of Village History along the Suffolk-Essex Border Bulmer, Essex: Bulmer History Society

Bettley, J and Pevsner, N. (2007) *Essex: The Buildings of England*. Yale University Press: London.

Bulmer Parish Council (2003) The Bulmer Appraisal: First Report July 2003

Victoria County History of Essex

Royal Commission of Historic Monuments (1911) Vol 1. Essex North West

### Web site information

Bulmer Brick & Tile Company:

[http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam/2006\\_esher\\_cameo.html](http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam/2006_esher_cameo.html)

LCA - Section 3.0 Landscape Character Assessment of Braintree District:

[http://www.braintree.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C556317B-DBD2-46D7-A2F3-7DC22E3CED85/0/11100101Section30\\_270906.pdf](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C556317B-DBD2-46D7-A2F3-7DC22E3CED85/0/11100101Section30_270906.pdf)



## 7 Contact Details

For further information regarding this Conservation Area Appraisal or regarding properties within the Bulmer Conservation Area please contact:

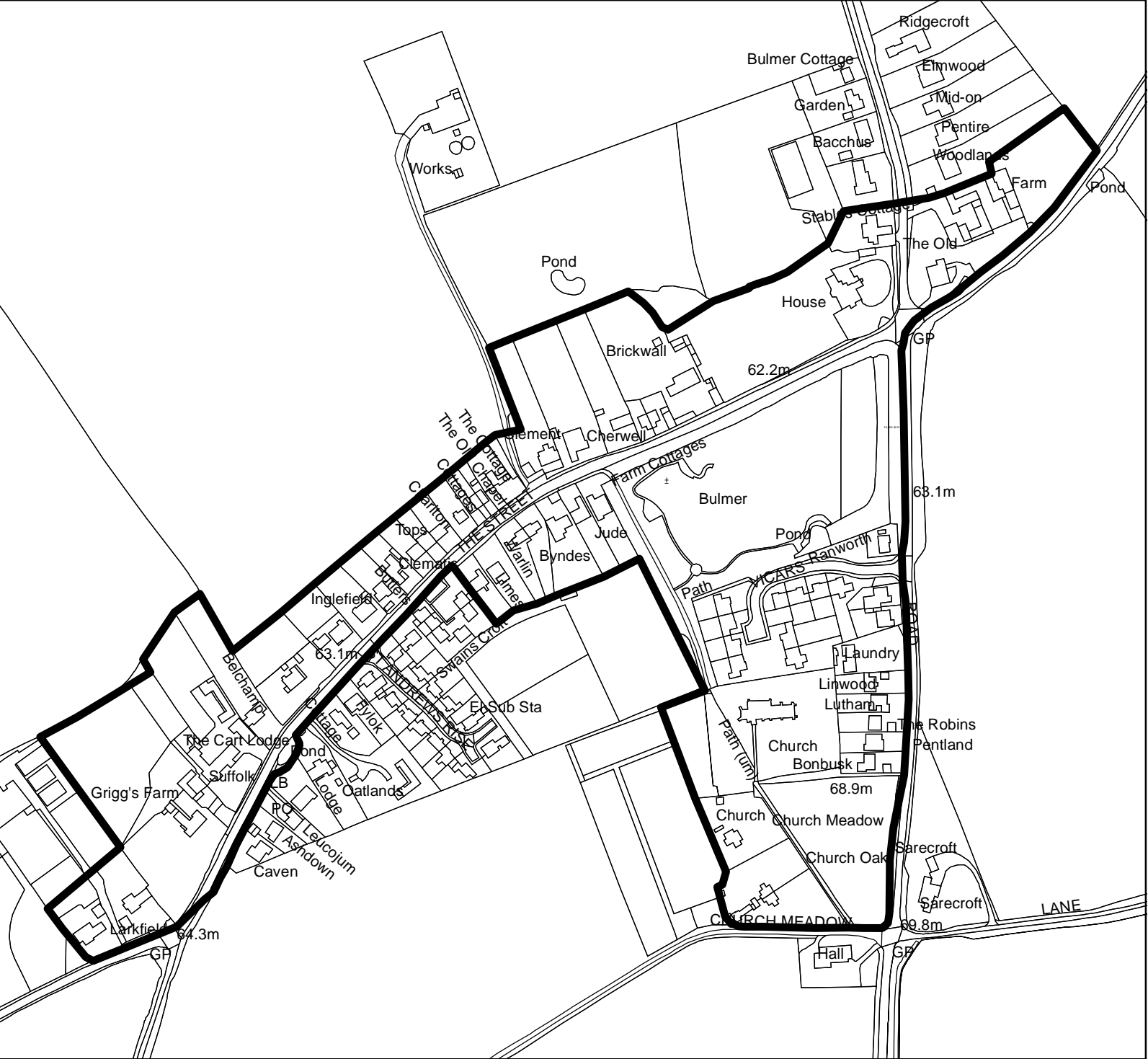
Braintree District Council  
Development Services  
Causeway House  
Braintree  
Essex  
CM7 9HB

Tel: 01376 552525

# Appendix 1

## Figure 1 Map of the Bulmer Conservation Area

# Appendix 1 Figure One Map of Bulmer Conservation Area



1:3500

**Key**

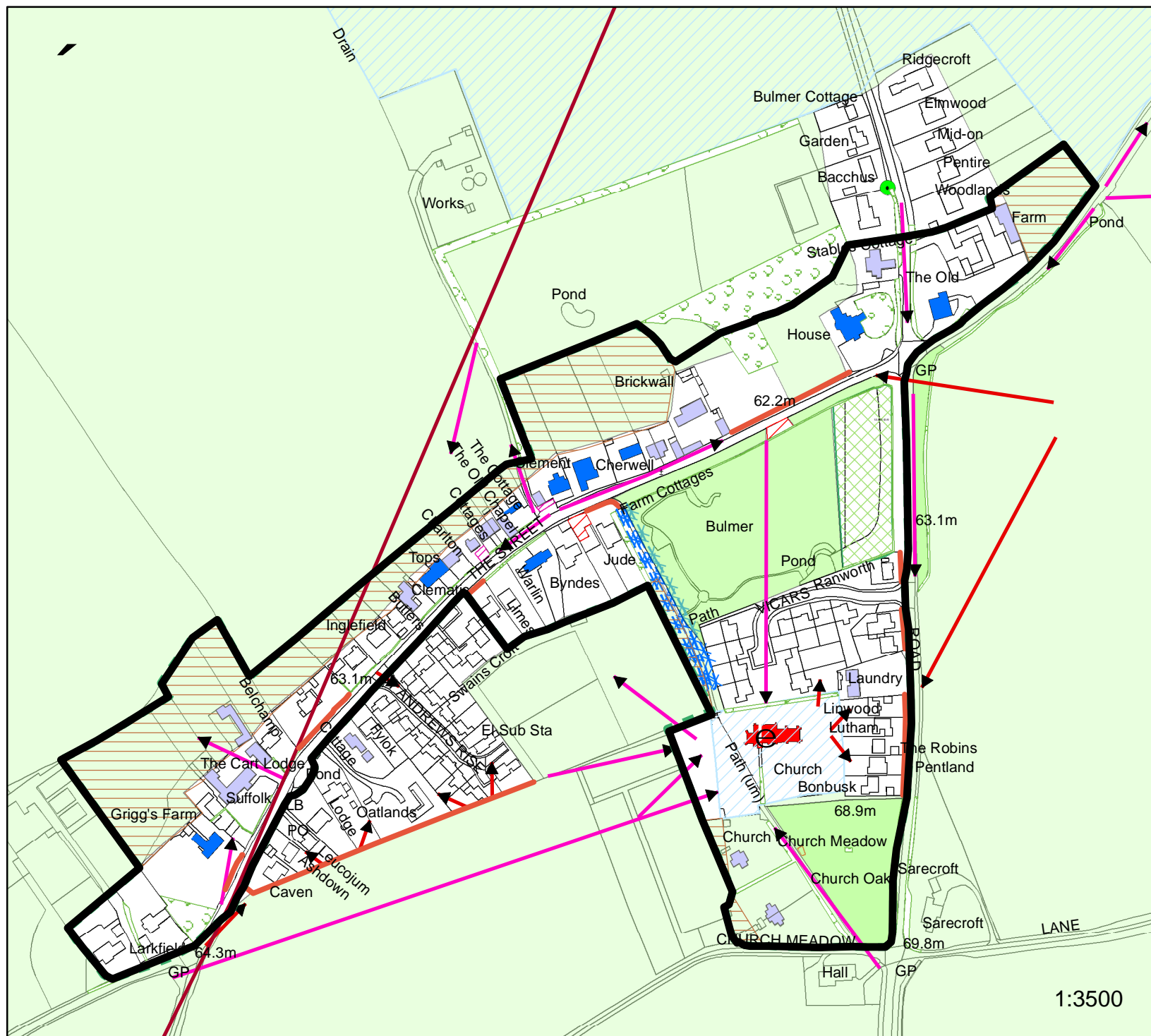
-  Conservation Area

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## Appendix 2

### Figure 2 Townscape Analysis Map

# Appendix Two Figure Two Townscape Analysis Map Bulmer Conservation Area



**Key**

- Landmark Buildings
- Conservation Area
- Existing Conservation Areas
- Visually Important Space
- Tree Preservation Order
- TPO Group
- Negative Views Vistas
- Archaeological Road
- Positive Floorspace
- Positive Views Vistas
- Additions to Conservation Area
- Important Green Space
- Negative Frontage
- Negative Floorscape
- Archaeological Sites
- Important Hedges & Trees
- Buildings Townscape Merit
- Special Landscape Area

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## Appendix 3

### Article 4 Directions

Permitted development rights allow certain minor works to be undertaken to dwelling houses without the need to apply for planning permission; these were most recently amended on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008. Rights may be removed following a strict procedure, which includes separate public consultation.

Directions under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 allow the removal of permitted development rights in conservation areas. The implementation of an Article 4(2) Direction means that in certain additional cases a planning application is required, in these additional cases there is no fee to make the application.

The following rights may be removed on dwelling houses, which will add to the protection of the character of the conservation area:

Schedule 2	Part 1	Class A	The enlargement , improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house
		Class B	The an enlargement of a dwelling house consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof
		Class C	Any other alteration to the roof of a dwelling house
		Class D	The erection of construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwelling house
		Class E	The provision within the curtilage of the dwelling house of any building or enclosure, swimming or other pool for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house as such, or the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of such a building or enclosure; or a container used for domestic heating purposes for the storage of oil or liquid petroleum gas.
		Class F	Hardstanding within the curtilage of a dwelling house
		Class G	The installation or replacement of a chimney, flue, or soil vent pipe on a dwelling house
		Class H	The installation or replacement of a microwave antenna on a dwelling house

- |         |         |   |
|---------|---------|---|
| Part 2  | Class A | The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence or wall or other means of enclosure           |
|         | Class C | The painting of the exterior of any building or work  |
| Part 31 | Class B | Any building operation consisting of the demolition of the whole or any part of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure |