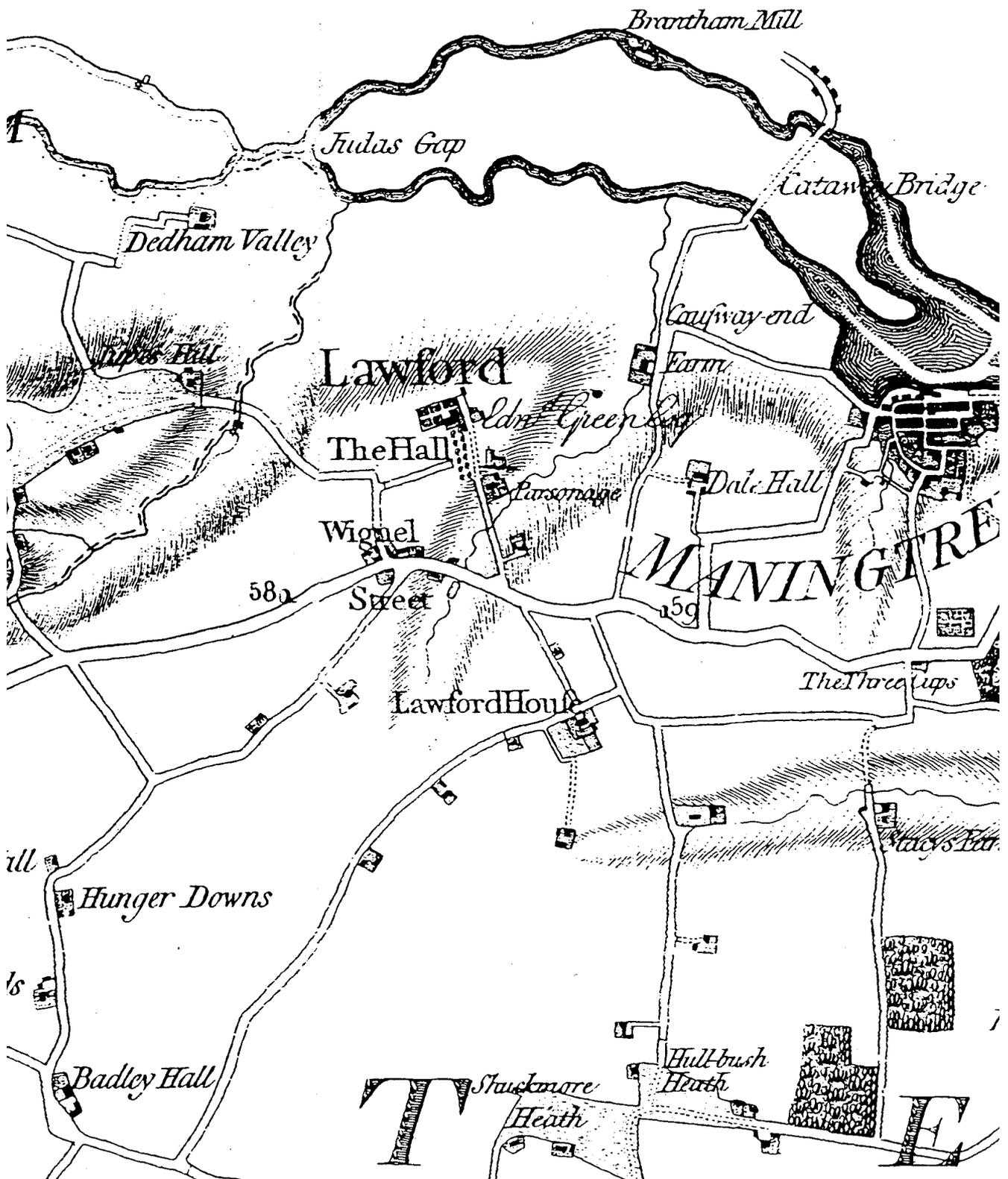




Lawford Conservation Area



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

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

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

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

SUMMARY

The current Area boundary gives due recognition to the importance of Lawford Hall and its designed landscape, to the intrinsic character of the church and of Church Hill, and the quality of the earlier sections of the main part of the village. The main developed part of the Area on Wignall Street is in a relatively deep valley, secluded by the landform and by the wealth of mature trees. The Area is also notable for the wealth of views in and around the parkland, and over the Stour estuary.

Lawford Conservation Area

LOCATION

Lawford is nestled between the A137 and the B1352 and fronts out onto the Stour Estuary. The adjacent settlements of Manningtree and Mistley form the basis for the policy area in the Local Plan. The Conservation Area develops northwards from the western tip of the village, encompassing Lawford hall and grounds, until reaching the railway line.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The 1777 Essex map of Chapman and André shows Lawford as the grouping of church and Hall, with a parsonage and a large house (now Abbots Manor) on Church Hill. Otherwise, development is virtually restricted to the junction round Charity Farm, which with the Kings Arms pub is separately named "Wignel Street".

The isolated position of the church is strong evidence for its foundation as an estate church and associated with the hall from earliest times. The fine chancel, one of the outstanding medieval structures in the county, was almost certainly provided by Sir Benet de Cokefield, Lord of the Manor and owner of both church and hall, around 1340. Possession has since been in the hands of the Waldegrave and Dent families until sold to the current owners, the Nichols family, in 1865. This family has been responsible for many of the estate buildings and facilities which are a prominent feature of the village: the Ogilvies of Lawford Place were also considerable benefactors in the early years of the last century.

By the date of the first 6" Ordnance Survey edition in 1874, Lawford had clearly become established as the village on the main road, with development spreading along the southern edge towards the junction with Church Hill. This and the contemporary large scale sheet show the Hall with a double avenue to the south and a wilderness called The Rookery to the north, past which the lane runs to the impressive farm buildings and the Great Eastern line to Harwich.

Since that time, housing development has taken place to complete the road frontage eastwards to Cox's Hill, with limited infill within the Area.

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The Area takes in the Lawford Park on the west side of Church Hill, extending northwards to the railway line, and to include the church, the estate farmyard and other developments on the east side of Church Hill. South of Wignall Street, the Area is limited to take in 19th century developments and any more modern infills.

REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN POLICY CONTEXT

The Area falls inside the boundary of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is particularly important for the protection the character of the Grade I listed buildings of Lawford Hall and Church. The majority of the area is outside the Development Boundary. The access route to Lawford Hall, Church Hill, is identified as a Protected Lane.

AREA APPRAISAL

Lawford Hall

Close to the northern edge of the Conservation Area is a splendid group of agricultural buildings in red brick with blue diaper patterning and arched openings all now with concrete pantiled roofs. There is a fine pair of cottages of two and a half storeys, dated 1871, with a steep clay tiled roof, a central stack, crow-step gables and small crow-step gable dormers. The outbuildings have a mixture of king post and scissor trusses surrounding a courtyard. These farm buildings come at the foot of a steep grassy slope studded with mature trees. On the west side of the lane just beyond the agricultural buildings is another delightful estate cottage.

The track continues northwards and the edge of the Area is reached at the railway embankment through which the lane passes under a semi-circular arched brick tunnel. There is a pleasant view north-eastwards from the other side of the tunnel and attractive views between the outbuildings and the tunnel to fields outside the Area to the east. Magnificent trees and mature hedgerows are too numerous to mention in this setting.

Lawford Hall itself is a very fine building. The north elevation is Elizabethan; two and a half storeys in height, with walls of deep pink render under a roof of old clay tiles. The north front has boldly projecting wings with jettied ends. The south front was re-cased in mid-Georgian times in red brick with small-paned sash windows under rubbed brick voussoirs. An elegant door-case is reached via a circular drive set within a small forecourt framed by yews and a low brick wall with decorative brick copings. Perhaps because of the lack of level ground to the north, a two storey red brick stable wing with an attractive paved forecourt stands on a relatively prominent position to the south-east of the main front. A conifer screen to the east of the drive restricts views across the river. The east front of the house to the main drive retains its attractive late 17th Century railings. A double avenue of limes has been planted running south from the main front.

Church Hill

At the southern end of the private enclosures of the house, the Church of St. Mary presides over a small group of cottages. The churchyard wall to the north is identical to that fronting the south forecourt of the hall; that to the south is also in brick but with plainer copings. While there is plenty of mature planting in the churchyard, there is a splendid view eastwards over Manningtree and the Estuary, towards the tower of the Royal Hospital School. The two most notable features of the church are the extravagant chancel windows in curvilinear Decorated style and the astonishing tower, faced in a piebald mixture of brick, flint, puddingstone and septaria. A smooth rendered north aisle with a slate roof leads to a new Church Hall of yellow brick with simple detailing.

A significant feature both inside and outside the churchyard is Church Clarke's Cottage, a pretty one-and-a-half storey house with rendered walls under a roof of old clay tiles with traditional dormers. Next to this is The Old School House, an estate building from the 19th Century in Tudor style with brick walls, blue brick diapering and a clay tiled roof. The Church forecourt is surrounded by mature trees and has attractive views over parkland to the west. To the south stands The Rectory, dating from the early 1960's and a pleasant building in red brick with a clay tiled roof and classical details. As so often, this has been created out of the grounds of The Old Rectory, a splendid double pile house of five bays, with a significant pair of gables to the lane, interesting moulded brick cornice and string course details to the south elevation and a prominent porch on the principal north elevation supporting the arms of St. John's College, Cambridge.

The lane dips through mature trees past a pretty thatched cottage of one and a half storeys and pink rendered walls and The Woodman, a two storey brick cottage with pantiled roof and small paned sash and casement windows standing close to the carriageway edge. There are attractive glimpses of parkland on either side of the road at this point. At the top of a short rise fringed by dense hedgerows reaching an arch over the road, stands Abbots' Manor, a pretty two storey house with sash windows set in pink render under a hipped slate roof. The attractive grounds include mature trees and a splendid view to the north east.

Just beyond this is the open frontage to Hacienda and an adjacent bungalow. The chain link fencing is insubstantial in this context and could be improved. At the junction with the main road is the War Memorial (Listed Grade II), supported visually by a large oak tree. Prominent on the opposite corner outside the Area is Ogilvie Hall, a spreading design in Arts-and-Crafts styling with pebble dashed elevations and a roof of concrete tiles. There is a simple but well designed modern extension to the front. Its main road frontage contains mature trees and an excellent hedge, though its side fence to Church Hill is not as effective.

Tye Hill and Wignall Street

Development on the south side of Tye Hill consists of groups of council houses probably dating from the 1930's

and 1950's. The earlier buildings are the more attractive, but all have paired and well-organised vehicle accesses over the grass verge. Beyond two modern houses stand the Almshouses. This is a long low range with a prominent gable to the road frontage in diapered brick, and an attractive timber arcaded verandah. A prominent conifer guards the rather accidental vehicular entrance at the north east corner.

The Area continues with The Mount, now one cottage with plain brick facades and modern windows under a slate roof. Much more prominent in the street scene is The Old School House, of diapered brick with Tudor details and a substantial central stack. This makes an extremely picturesque grouping with the former school next door, now a residential conversion itself, and a pair of cottages set back to the west behind neatly-maintained front gardens.

The incline from Tye Hill levels out at this point, which is accentuated by Park View in an important location close to the carriageway edge on the south side of the road. There are indeed glimpses of the park to the north, past Serena, a diminutive vernacular cottage with a gambrel roof. This is matched by Brook Cottage to the south of Park View, the grouping given more visual distinction by the setting-back of the two modern houses with their well-stocked gardens to the east. A short lane leads to an empty overgrown site within the Area.

Wignall Street turns the slight corner and rises from this point, past a varied group of properties on the south side and the well organised grounds of Valley Garden Supplies to the north. Opposite Park View is another small cottage with a gambrel roof, though there were major building works to the rear at the time of survey.

Development on the south side of Wignall Street consists first of all of five cottages in two groups, with varied access arrangements and garden frontage treatments. The eastern group of three cottages retains many original features, including door cases and, in two examples, the original small-paned sash windows. Three new houses with a shared access step back from the road frontage, and lead on to dreary three storey houses. Beyond this again is Hillside, a vernacular property of two-and-a-half storeys with rendered facades under a gambrel roof of clay tiles. The front garden is densely planted with a variety of shrubs and is a relatively significant feature in the street. The loss of the original windows to the house has robbed it of much of its character.

Approaching the summit of the hill, a similar house to that just described – and sharing many of its virtues and faults – leads on to a small group of vernacular buildings comprising a cottage of one-and-a-half storeys and a diminutive dwelling close to the pavement edge. These houses have varied access details and have lost their original windows. They face the Kings Arms, a prominent and attractive listed vernacular building of two storeys with a long low frontage and a steeply-pitched roof in clay tiles. While its rear gardens are attractively laid out, the pub forecourt is a bland expanse of tarmac open to the road edge. West of the pub is a modern house of simple design, followed by Forge Cottage in a significant corner location. The delicately modelled brick facades in Flemish bond are extremely attractive, complimented by original door and window features.

Beyond the junction with Dedham Road is Charity Farmhouse, a pleasant early 19th Century design with other significant features such as its brick front wall, corner planting and an outbuilding to the side. There are no views into the parkland from the road, although a short walk on public footpaths to the north allows attractive views to develop. The Area boundary follows Dedham Road to a park lodge with Victorian gothic detailing.

Views down Dedham Road are focused on Crossway, a vernacular cottage with pink rendered walls and a substantial roof of old clay tiles. A pair of estate cottage dating from 1957 and constructed in a simple neo-Georgian style complete the main road frontage in the Area. These share a single access to the west, with a considerable area of gravel.

Hungerdown Lane

The Area runs southwards to include the properties fronting Hungerdown Lane. Rose Cottage on the west side, a much altered vernacular property with poorly-maintained vehicle parking, leads past modern houses to a fascinating group of former estate buildings, including The Old Laundry. A cottage at the rear has elevations in diapered brick behind a long single-storey brick range under a hipped roof which projects boldly to the road edge. Beyond this is a pretty house with symmetrical elevations behind a prominent hedge, and a pair of estate cottages identical to those at Rose Valley next to The Old School on the main road. On the western side of this short road, a pair of late-Victorian or Edwardian houses stand among modern properties of no overriding historic interest. The lane ends in a series of allotments, with no real views over open countryside.

APPRAISAL PLAN

The above analysis has been used to generate Maps 1, 2 and 3, indicating the essential structure of the Conservation Area and its relative quality. Included are features regarded as either negative or neutral compared to the character and appearance of the Area, as follows.

Negative factors

Only the flats on the south side of Wignall Street have been classified as negative factors, because of their insensitive design and bland frontage.

Neutral factors

The post war developments on Hungerdown Lane are relatively innocuous but are still disappointing given the attractive quality of earlier buildings in this location. The bungalow at the rear is of no visual interest and is classes as a neutral factor as a result.

Further Information

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

There are no specific recommendations under this heading.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: CURTILAGES

The car park to the Kings Arms is an open, plain area which would be improved with some form of front boundary to give greater definition from the street.

SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

There are no specific suggestions under this heading.

BOUNDARY REVIEW

Ogilvie Hall is a prominent and attractive building at the entrance to Church Hill. It comes with a relatively large curtilage, however, and there does not seem to be any additional controls, which might be required in its regard. On balance it has been decided that the Area boundary should remain as it is.

While the post war houses in Hungerdown Lane do little for its visual quality, the simple Area boundary is appropriate in all the circumstances. The bungalow at the rear is visually divorced from the rest of the lane, but as the boundary represents the edge of development in this location there seems to be little justification to alter it to exclude the bungalow. It is again recommended that there is no change to the existing boundary.



1. The Georgian front of Lawford Hall dates from about 1756. Its small formal forecourt is reached down an avenue parallel to the continuation of Church Hill; this avenue has recently been replanted.



2. The Hall's Elizabethan origins are revealed in its side and rear elevations, with boldly projecting wings of plaster under a massive hipped tiled roof.



3. North of the Hall is a fine group of estate farm buildings, constructed in diapered brickwork with king-post and scissor trusses. The decorative detailing of the associated cottages is matched by other cottages and lodges in the Park.



4. The most notable part of St Mary's Church is the impressive chancel dating from the early 14th century. The large windows have different tracery patterns, of which at least five are quite unusual.



5. Church Hill is a delightful lane, affording glimpses on either side into fields and parkland and connecting with several distinctive properties including this estate house known as The Woodman.



6. These almshouses are of a very distinctive design, with a gable in diapered brick fronting plain elevations with an attractive verandah. A large conifer guards the entrance from Wignall Street.



7. Estate influence is also found in this pretty grouping, including the former school. While all these buildings share many features, the school and school house are given additional prominence with their mullioned windows, central chimney stack and bell-cote.



8. Park View occupies a prominent position at a bend in the main road. It is associated with two small vernacular cottages, and more modern infill development on the south side of Wignall Street.



9. West of Park View, development on the main road is more consistent. It includes the much altered three-bay house to the right, an attractive sequence of Victorian cottages, and the unfortunate block of flats in the centre of the view.



10. The early settlement known as Wignall Street includes Crossway, an attractive vernacular cottage set in well-maintained grounds. It is an important feature in the scene, particularly as seen here from Dedham Road.



11. The junction with Dedham Road is marked by Church Farm, with its prominent corner planting and frontage wall. This attractive building forms the effective entrance to the farm from the west, and makes an important group with Forest Cottage.



12. Hungerdown Lane from the south. An older pair of cottages and modern infill face a fascinating group of estate buildings, including the former laundry, a substantial house and groups of cottages.