



# Thurrock Rural Settlement Assessments







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# Acknowledgements

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*Cover Image: Horndon on the Hill, view looking south from Village Centre*

*Inside Cover: Fobbing Church tower seen from the marshes*



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# Executive Summary

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There is a rich tapestry of heritage across the Borough of Thurrock, from Scheduled Monuments and listed buildings to historic landscapes, Registered Parks and Gardens and designated conservation areas.

Most significantly, the Thurrock settlements evolved through their relationship with the River Thames and in centuries' response to the management of manorial estates and surrounding agrarian land.

These 'villages' as we see them today have a significance which we need to be aware of when managing places and their social and built characteristics.

Settlements are characterised with a mixed vernacular of building styles typical of South Essex and its regional materials and detailing, they have unique spatial qualities interspersed or encapsulated by landscapes unique to them and the region.

Some settlements are more intensified given post war development, but there remains high status heritage within them and surrounding their geographic scope.

This document collates a series of baseline studies for 6 'Rural Settlements:'

- Orsett & Baker Street
- Fobbing
- Bulphan
- Horndon on the Hill
- North Stifford
- West Tilbury

Each chapter sets out an evidenced analysis, including data and an overview authored by independent accredited experts, demonstrating a rich Historic Environment unique to the borough, and how it has evolved into the current places we see and experience today.

Developing an understanding of these Rural Settlements informs decisions for current management and capacity for future growth; the contents herein also offer signposts to what is of local significance; this is a baseline to each place.

We need to understand the settlements which form the basis of the Thurrock region to protect their essence, and to prevent the rich history of Thurrock from being diminished.

The chapters are a collective effort in which going forward is based upon looking back and understanding Thurrock's individual past.

## PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This study is led by an understanding and appreciation of the historic environment which forms a baseline in contextualising the evolution of selected settlements and ultimately providing a 'snapshot' of how their character currently stands.

As a blended 'place assessment' it has the benefit of:

- Providing the required heritage baseline to inform conservation, which in itself is about 'managing change,'
- Identifying sensitive edges of existing settlements to inform Plan Making,
- Offering an academic basis for future local community discussion,
- Acting as an evidence base for SWOT assessment for constraints/opportunities highlighting appropriate place-making improvements that future developments could help deliver,
- Serving as a basis for future characterisation studies to inform design principles / guidance/ coding and other historic environment management tools such as conservation area appraisals and locally listed heritage assets.

The geographic scope uses current definitions of the settlement extents as well as hard boundary markers such as large roads and railways, and relationships to surrounding settlements; wider maps show settlements in context and their general arrangements. A Sensitivity Assessment for each settlement is included, this scores sensitive edges using RAG (Red, Amber, Green) assessments based on the datasets of archaeology, landscape and built heritage.

Each section begins with an overview and leads into a written description of the development of the settlement based on the archaeological and cartographic data, detailing its history and development with a summary of the important archaeological assets in and around the immediate vicinity.

Further to this section, the Historic Landscape section details analysis of key local landscape features, sensitive viewpoints, and vistas. This section has clear links into the historic environment and sensitive edges of settlements, but it is not an all-encompassing Landscape Character Assessment (please refer to the Thurrock Integrated Landscape Character Assessment prepared by LUC).

Each settlement's Built Heritage as evidenced on the HER (Historic Environment Record) is set out clearly. Evidence of designations is provided with commentary where appropriate in relation to overall contribution and significance, including reference to important views and intrinsic links to Landscape and Archaeology. This section is more 'visual', making reference by way of example to typologies, materials and the local vernacular.

Finally, the analysis of each settlement is concluded by a section which looks at "The Village Today;" a study of the current settlement pattern, topography, hydrology, open space, access, movement, use, density and built form in each village. This is not intended to act as a cohesive urban character study but instead provides a snapshot picture of the village as it stands in 2023 and evidences the extant features of each settlement's historical evolution as described in the previous sections.

The document contains a bibliography with links to aid further study and resources. It should be used as a baseline piece of evidence to inform further research, whilst providing a picture of the essence of these highly significant places.





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*Image left: China Lane, Bulphan*

*Back Cover: South Hill, Horndon on the Hill*







