

West Tilbury Conservation Area



Character Appraisal

March 2007





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Introduction

West Tilbury Conservation Area was designated in 1991.

The designation of a conservation area should not be seen as an end in itself. It is important that conservation areas are regularly reviewed and the preparation of a character appraisal is a part of this process. An appraisal should be regarded as an opportunity to re-assess a conservation area and to evaluate its special interest and significance. It is the defining of special interest that is the main purpose of the appraisal. The appraisal should also provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about the future of the conservation area through the development of management considerations.

The core of the appraisal is the definition of the special interest of the West Tilbury Conservation Area and this is intended to provide a vivid, succinct picture of how it is today together with an evaluation of its key characteristics.

Reference is made to the relevant national and local planning policy framework. An outline is provided of the steps that have been taken to involve the local community and other interested parties in the preparation of the appraisal.

The conservation area boundary remains unaltered. An indication of management considerations is provided.

It is emphasised that no appraisal can ever be fully comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.



Planning Policy Framework

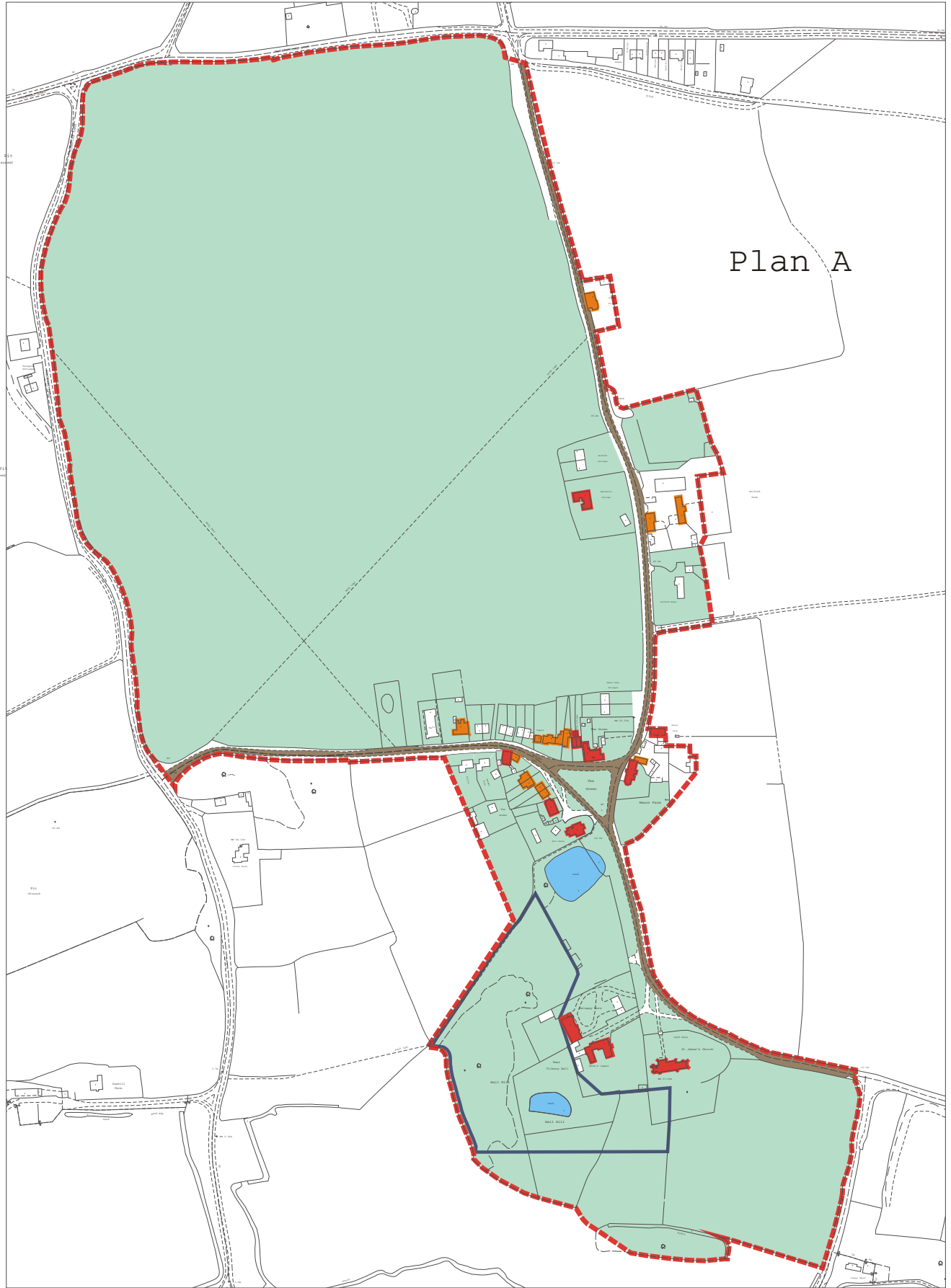
A conservation area is an 'area of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (*Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*). Designation places certain duties upon local planning authorities. They must review the 'special interest' of their areas from time to time and also consider whether new conservation areas should be designated.

The Adopted Thurrock Borough Local Plan 1997 forms part of the development plan for Thurrock and provides the basis for decisions on land use planning. It contains policies regarding the designation, review and enhancement of conservation areas, together with guidance relating to the control of development within them. These Local Plan policies are outlined in Appendix 1.

The Council is currently preparing its *Local Development Framework*. This will be a range of documents containing policies and proposals to guide the future development and use of land in Thurrock up to 2021, including those relating to conservation areas. It will form part of the statutory development plan and will replace the Local Plan.

With regard to the control of development within conservation areas the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995* requires that planning applications be made for certain types of development which are elsewhere considered to be 'permitted development'. This includes various types of cladding; the insertion of dormer windows into roof slopes; the erection of satellite dishes on walls, roofs or chimneys fronting a highway; and the installation of radio masts and antennae. The size of house and industrial extensions that may be carried out in conservation areas without a specific grant of planning permission is also more restricted.

Plan A



Legend:

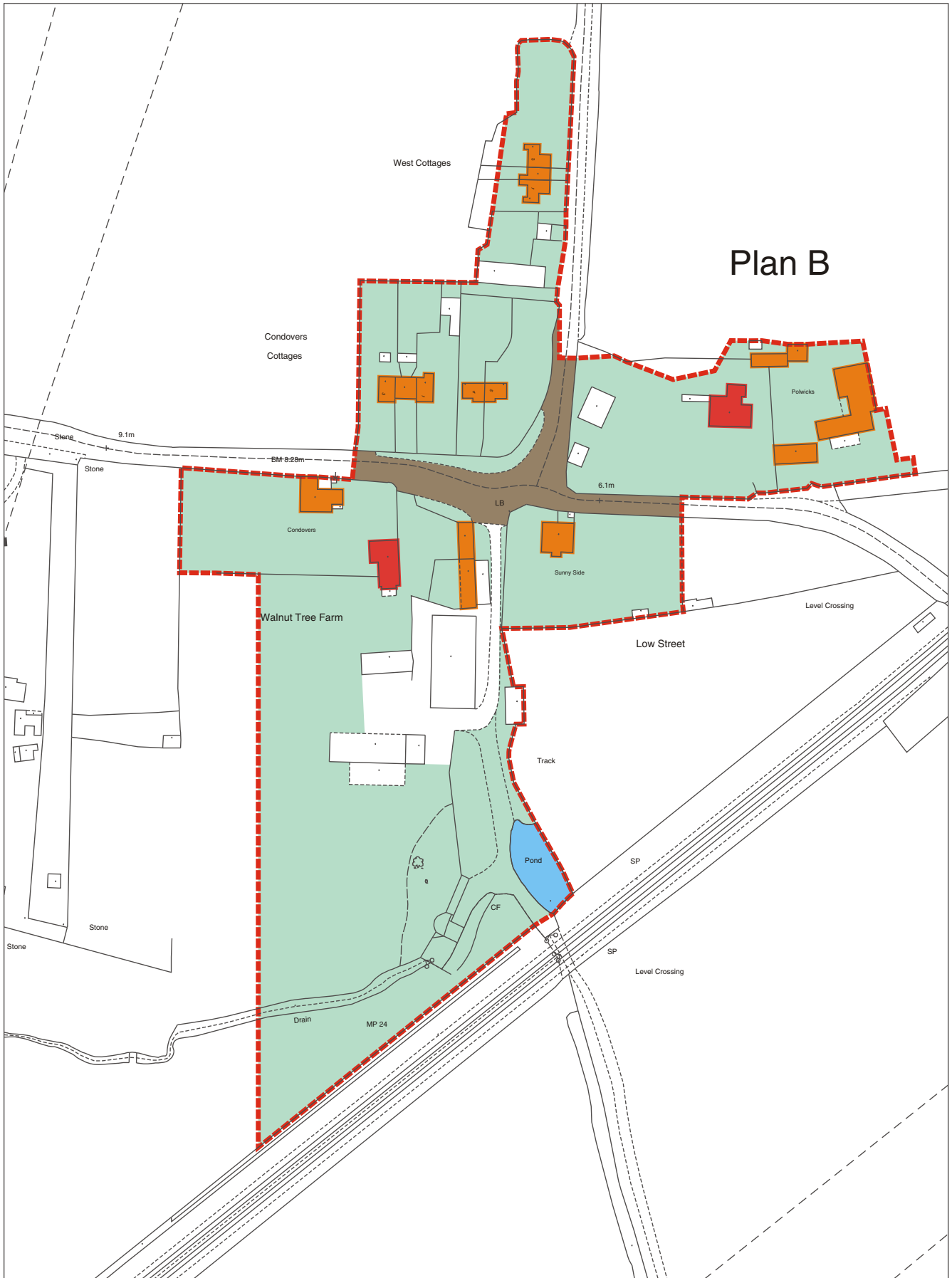
- Significant open space
- Listed Building
- Significant physical/built form

- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Highways of historic significance
- Conservation area boundary



n.b. detailed information regarding listed buildings or the scheduled ancient monument should be verified separately.

Plan B



Legend:

- Significant open space
- Listed Building
- Significant physical/built form
- Highways of historic significance
- Conservation area boundary



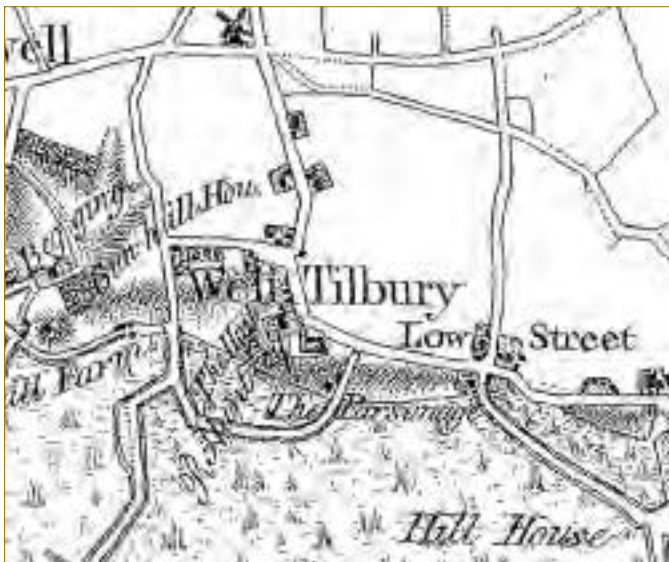
n.b. detailed information regarding listed buildings or the scheduled ancient monument should be verified separately.

Special interest of West Tilbury

1. Origins and historic development

West Tilbury is situated at the edge of an escarpment immediately overlooking the marshes. Human activity has long been present in the vicinity and evidence has included cropmarks, rectilinear features, trackways and ring ditches. Roman pottery has also been found in the vicinity and it is thought that a Roman road passed nearby.

In the Medieval period West Tilbury was a small settlement very closely related to agriculture. Much evidence of this past has been retained in the present landscape. This includes a complete example of a Medieval 'open field' system in the area of The Great Common Field bounded by Rectory Road, Turnpike Lane, Blue Anchor Lane and Muckingford Road. Much Medieval 'common land' upon which farmers had common rights to graze animals still remains in the vicinity of West Tilbury.

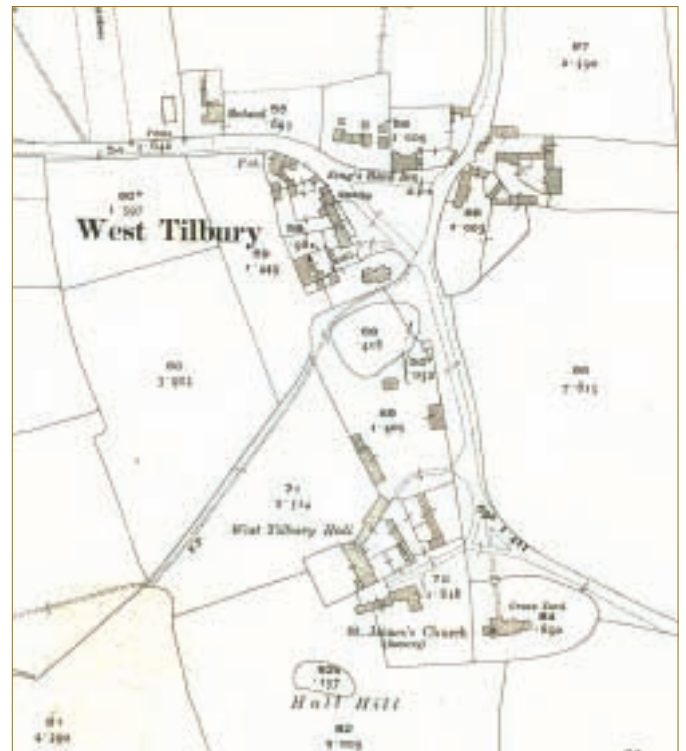


Chapman & Andre map (1777)

An area adjoining the village (Hall Hill) has been made a scheduled ancient monument because of, amongst other things, the potential that it has to show development at West Tilbury from pre-Saxon to the Medieval period.

West Tilbury Hall is the manor of the village. It was built in the 16th century in a prominent hilltop position on the site of the previous 'Domesday Manor'. St. James's church and churchyard were provided immediately adjacent to the Hall. A Medieval market and fair, both dating from the 14th century, were held at West Tilbury on the area that is now The Green.

West Tilbury has a well-chronicled association with Elizabeth I and her address to the troops at the time of the Armada.



Map of West Tilbury (1922)

A distinguishing characteristic of West Tilbury is the fact that there has been very little physical change to the settlement. This has resulted in the evolution of a settlement that is sporadic in its character. The built form of West Tilbury is dominated by the adjoining and surrounding landscape.

2. Character analysis

General character and settlement form of West Tilbury

West Tilbury continues to be a rural settlement within a historic rural agricultural setting on an escarpment. There are wide views to and from the former marshes to the south and west and from the north and east across the agricultural land. The church tower and trees around the churchyard are an important silhouette and landmark from all directions.



West Tilbury from the south

The historic elongated central common encompasses The Green and the meeting of several ancient lanes and footpaths, Blue Anchor Lane, Rectory Road and Church Road. The latter leads to the lower historic group of buildings at Low Street.

Church Road & The Green

The Green is closely mown grass, has metalled roads with soft verges. Church Road leads to the south from The Green. They are framed by –

i. to the south

The group of the 11th century St. James's church, which is a listed building (LB), with its 19th century west tower; its former churchyard; the 17th century (or earlier) H-plan West Tilbury Hall (LB); its former farmyard and the residentially converted 16th century barn (LB) (now Malagay).

ii. to the west

West of Church Road are historic field boundaries and a pond within a more recent copse of trees. A footpath descends to the west between the pond and the dwelling Well House (LB) with its protruding hedged garden. Fronting The Green and set behind small gardens are three buildings, the 19th century stock brick house the Bakery (LB), the 20th century 3 to 6 The Green and culminating in the roadside buildings of the early 19th century three-storey Post House (LB) at the entrance to Rectory Road.

iii. to the north

Fronting The Green and set behind set behind small walled gardens is a group of dwellings from Capers to the early 19th century gault brick nos. 1 and 2 The Green (LB) and, the late 18th century Kings Head PH (LB) set on the road edge.



Church Road leading to The Green



The Green looking west



St James's church



The Green looking north

iv. to the east

Close to the entrance to Blue Anchor Lane are the 17th century Manor Farmhouse (LB), its late 18th century granary (LB) and farmyard buildings and the field boundaries.



Manor Farmhouse

The Great Common Field

The Great Common Field retains its historic form as a single large open field, which would have been communally tilled in Medieval times. It has hedgerows with trees to the field and village boundaries. Several footpaths traverse it.

Rectory Road

Rectory Road is an ancient lane, which is flanked by the hedgerows of field boundaries. Within the village, Rectory Road is flanked by small gardens in front of set-back 20th century houses. The 19th century brick former schoolhouse is of special interest.



Former Schoolhouse

Blue Anchor Lane

Blue Anchor Lane is an ancient lane running north out of the village. It is framed by the hedgerows and ditches of the field boundaries. It is bounded by -

i. to the west

The 15th century timber framed H-plan house, Marshall's Cottages (LB) set within a large hedged garden,

ii. to the east

The historic farm buildings at Holford Farm (located on the road edge of the farmyard) and the modern farmhouse, Holford House, situated within a high-hedged garden. There is an unusual historic stone boundary marker here located in the verge. Further to the north and close to the road edge is Blue Anchor Cottage, which is also of interest.



Holford Farm, Blue Anchor Lane

Church Road leading to Low Street

Church Road is an ancient lane, which descends between high hedges and trees to the southeast to the Low Street group of buildings surrounding the junction with Low Street Lane. Church Road, although an ancient narrow lane, carries regular heavy goods vehicles traffic to and from the nearby industrial activities at Station Road.



Church Road leading to Low Street

Low Street

Central to this area is the road junction of Church Road with Low Street Lane. This junction is framed by -

i. on the south west corner

Within a large treed and hedged boundary garden, the 15th century Walnut Tree Cottage (LB) and outbuildings to the east set close to the lane edge. Also here is the roofless but significant 19th century stock brick building Condovers.

ii. on the north west corner

Set behind modest front gardens, good 20th century farm estate cottages no.s 1 to 5 Condovers Cottages and on Low Street Lane, closer to the road edge, West Cottages



Condovers Cottages

iii. on the north east corner

Set within a large garden, behind a wall and hedge the 17th century or earlier house, Polwicks (LB) and its outbuildings. Former ancillary farmyard buildings lie neglected to the east of Polwicks.



Polwicks

iv. on the southeast corner

Within a large garden behind a high wall, hedge and mature trees is the dwelling Sunny Side

v. to the south

A farm lane descends past the rear of the outbuildings of Walnut Tree Cottage to a copse of trees in the area of a former pond. There is a group of modern farm buildings here and the railway line to the south.

Building materials and details in West Tilbury

Although the village's timber frame buildings and oldest plan forms date from the Medieval period, the present external appearance of many of these earlier original buildings owe their external surface character from the later agriculturally prosperous 18th and 19th centuries. Although retained, these alterations hid a wealth of earlier historic fashion and detail. The later use of render or re-facing in brick, the raising of roofs and the alteration of doors, porches and windows took place.

The basic building forms with later detail changes give West Tilbury Conservation Area its varied sense of historic detail, with the exception of some of the 20th century buildings and additions. The use of locally sourced materials and skills unites the character of the historic vernacular structures to give them their special interest.

In addition to the historic building forms, walls, roofs, doors and windows, the materials and details also have special interest.

St. James's church appears to be the only stone or flint structure in the village. Timber frame was commonly used with all pre-17th century buildings and subsequently rendered or clad with brick walls.

Timber frame

The Medieval and Tudor buildings in West Tilbury are constructed in timber frame with timber external walls. These are principally farming related buildings.

The farmyards had large functional barns which were usually of at least five bays with a central threshing floor, constructed in timber frame with a thatched or tiled steep dual pitch roof and horizontal weatherboard walls.

Within residential plots, the ancillary functions and buildings were clustered or attached to the rear and were smaller than the principal building.

However, the other structures were constructed from the same range of locally available materials. If not originally attached to the main structure there would be a free standing structure, close to the brick lined well, which would house the kitchen.

In a similar manner, farm and farmyard outbuildings are constructed in contemporary traditional forms and materials. The granaries were smaller and notably stood on staddle stones. They could be one or more storeys, had weatherboard walls and red tile pitched roofs.

From the 17th century, many buildings were plastered over and lime washed, concealing much of their framing. Plaster ornamentation develops from the 17th century onwards in the form of pargetting (incision or moulding of plaster).

Weatherboarding is also in use on farm buildings and as a later cladding for house external walls. This is usually painted white on the front or other important elevations and black or tarred on the sides or rear.

Brick

Hand made bricks come into use, apart from early chimney stacks, as external walling in the 18th century (red brick) and in the 19th century (yellow stock or grey gault brick).

Until the later 19th century lime mortar was used.

In the 20th century, re-pointing and repair often uses detrimental cement based mortar. Its use can often be seen in combination with the use of unsuitable protruding and thickened cement.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, cement and machine made bricks became available as a walling material.

Although previously lime render and weatherboard had been used to reduce the penetration of damp on traditional buildings, with the availability of expanded metal lath some buildings were encased in cement render.

Industrially produced materials such as asbestos and concrete tiles also came into use in the 20th century. Due to their interlocking, lower pitched roofs than before were constructed.

All of these forms contribute to the interest and character of West Tilbury Conservation Area although not all are externally visible. Earlier buildings are often upgraded with features such as lime washed render, sash windows or Victorian chimney stacks attached to the sides, rising from the ridge or parapet gables.

Community involvement

Involving the local community and raising public awareness has been an integral part of the process of preparing the character appraisal.

This took the form of sending consultation letters to all residents and occupants in the Conservation Area requesting views on the following-

- What features are important to West Tilbury Conservation Area and make it special
- What adds to the character
- What takes away from the character

Included with the consultation letter was a questionnaire together with a plan of the Conservation Area and a summary of the considered character and possible issues.

In addition, the entire public consultation process took place online on the Council's website. Notice of the public exhibitions was given in the local press.

Local ward members, the MP and other interested parties were consulted.

An exhibition with historic maps, photographs and documents was held on 21st and 23rd September 2006 at East Tilbury Village Hall, East Tilbury where Officers were available to talk through issues and answer questions.

The consultation responses affirmed the following issues:

- The importance of the designated Conservation Area
- The possible expansion to include other areas of special interest
- Involvement of the public in the process of character appraisals
- Involvement of the public in the production of management proposals
- The preservation and management of the special issues
- Any new proposal should respect and not detract from the existing character

Boundary changes

An important aspect of the appraisal process is the consideration of where the boundary of the Conservation Area should be drawn. The appropriateness of current boundaries should be regularly reassessed, perhaps on a five-year cycle (*Guidance on conservation area appraisals – English Heritage 2006*).

No boundary changes are considered necessary at this time.

Management considerations

Conservation Areas are living environments, which are inevitably subject to change and evolution. The original character of some buildings in the West Tilbury Conservation Area has already been altered, through for example replacement windows and concrete roof tiles. It is important to try and prevent erosion of the essential character of the Conservation Area as a result of such changes.

The restoration of original features should be promoted. The spread of the use of UPVC, a material that is neither sympathetic in appearance nor sustainable should be checked. Poor maintenance means that there will be a need to replace windows in many buildings and in such circumstances the opportunity should be taken to ensure the new windows are in character.

The appearance of properties that have already undergone alteration would be greatly improved if new windows were inserted to the original pattern. Front doors can also contribute greatly to the appearance of houses and controls to ensure that they are not replaced unsympathetically may also be valuable. Exposed and prominent boundary treatments in the Conservation Area are important and their alteration has the potential to be a problem.

The Council will consider the production of design guidance with regard to matters of the nature outlined to assist residents and landowners in their choices.

Once a conservation area is designated, additional planning controls can be introduced by limiting permitted development rights through the issue of an Article 4(2) direction under the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995*. Planning permission would then be required for the works that are specified.

There is no intention at this stage to consider use of an Article 4 direction. Nevertheless the Council reserves the right to consider use of a direction in the future if it is deemed necessary and appropriate to control serious loss of character. In the event that such a decision is taken, there would be a formal process of notification and opportunity for those affected to support or object to the proposal.

Management Proposals for West Tilbury Conservation Area were published in March 2007. The Management Proposals provide an outline of general and specific issues relevant to the Conservation Area. Actions are recommended.

Appendix 1 – Thurrock Borough Local Plan 1997 – Conservation Area policies

BE22 – Conservation Areas – Designation, Review and Enhancement

‘The Council will regularly review conservation area boundaries, amend them when necessary and examine the need to designate new conservation areas using the following broad criteria to assess the special interest of areas:

- (i) *The origins and development of the topography of the area;*
- (ii) *Archaeological significance and potential;*
- (iii) *Prevalent building materials, character and hierarchy of spaces;*
- (iv) *The quality and relationship of buildings in the area including the contribution of unlisted buildings;*
- (v) *The contribution made by trees and other green features.*

Using the above criteria, the Council will also formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas’.

BE23 – Development affecting Conservation Areas

‘Development proposals within, adjacent to, or affecting the Borough’s conservation areas will be expected to preserve and enhance their character or appearance. The Council will not permit any development that would be in conflict with this objective.

In this regard, special attention will be paid to the following:

- (i) *The retention and protection of all buildings, whether listed or not, trees and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of that area;*
- (ii) *The position of new buildings, which should enhance the character and appearance of the area and be in scale and harmony with the adjoining buildings and the area as a whole;*
- (iii) *The use of materials, which should be appropriate to the area and sympathetic to adjoining buildings.*

The desirability of preserving or enhancing the area will also be taken into consideration by the Council in the handling of development proposals which are outside the area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area.'

BE-23A-Demolition in Conservation Areas

'The Council will not grant consent for the total or substantial demolition of a building in a conservation area unless it can be shown to their satisfaction that the building is wholly beyond repair; incapable of reasonably beneficial use; or where its removal would enhance the character or appearance of the area.'

If necessary, the Council will impose a condition on the grant of any consent providing that any development shall not take place before a contract for carrying out the works of redevelopment on the site has been granted for the development for which the contract provides.'

BE24-Article Four Directions in Conservation Areas

'In exceptional circumstances, including where there are real and specific threats to the character of the conservation area, and subject to approval by the Secretary of State, the Council will make direction under article 4 of the General Development Order to restrict permitted development rights in conservation areas.'

Appendix 2-Listed Buildings in the West Tilbury Conservation Area as shown in the 17th list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (as at January 2007)

BLUE ANCHOR LANE Marshall's Cottages

Grade II*

Early C15 hall house with crosswings. Red plain tile roofs. One storey and attics in centre range, 2 storeys in crosswings. Timber framed, part plastered, part weatherboarded. Double hung, vertical sliding sash windows with glazing bars and modern casements. Dormer at rear. Crosswings are gabled to front and jettied. Internally much original work remains including crown posts roofs, and a late C15 mantel beam, with elaborate roll mouldings. (RCHM 5).

CHURCH ROAD Polwicks

Grade II

C17 or earlier house, timber framed and clad with yellow stock brick. Red plain tiled hipped roof in 2 parallel ranges. Two storeys. Three window range double hung vertical sliding sashes. Central door with hood on brackets. Stock brick chimney stacks. Parapet wall. (RCHM 7).

CHURCH ROAD Walnut Tree Cottage

Grade II

C15 house, timber framed and plastered with red plain tile roofs. Two storeys with gabled and jettied crosswing at north end. Three:one window range, casements. Black weatherboarded plinth. C16 and C19 red brick chimneystacks. Internally most of the original frame remains with jowled storey posts cambered tie beams and crown post roofs. (RCHM 6).

CHURCH ROAD West Tilbury Hall

Grade II

C17 or earlier house, timber framed, part plastered, part weatherboarded, with red plain tile roof. Two storeys with 2 projecting hipped gables, formerly jettied. C19 double hung vertical sliding sashes to first floor and C19 windows below. Central C19 porch, with red plain tile hipped roof. Timber framed wing at rear with red plain tile roof. (RCHM 4).

CHURCH ROAD
Barn to north of West Tilbury Hall

Grade II

C16 barn, timber framed and weatherboarded.

THE GREEN
Manor Farmhouse

Grade II

C17 house, timber-framed and weatherboarded, with red plain tile roof.

Two storeys. Four-window range double hung vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars. Later extensions at rear and north end. Modern gabled porch.

THE GREEN
Granary to northeast of Manor Farmhouse

Grade II

Late C18 granary timber-framed and weatherboarded, with grey slate hipped roof. Originally on staddle stones it is now supported on brick and concrete blocks

THE GREEN
Kings Head Public House

Grade II

Late C18 house, altered C19. Plastered brick, with red plain tile roof.

Two storeys. Four-window range double hung vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars. Two C19 ground floor bays, western one now main entrance.

THE GREEN
The Cottages (Nos 1 and 2)

Grade II

Early C19 house in grey gault brick, with modern tile hipped roof. Two storeys.

Two window range double hung vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars in gauged arches.

THE GREEN
Well House

Grade II

Early C19 house, in yellow stock brick, with red plain tile roof. Two storeys.

Gable projects centre front. Parapetted verges. Three window range double hung vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars. Modern porch and later extension at rear.

THE GREEN
The Bakery

Grade II

Early C19 house, in yellow stock brick, with red plain tile roof. Two storeys.

Two window range double hung vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars.

Lean-to at south end.

RECTORY ROAD
Post House

Grade II

Early C19 house in part plastered yellow stock brick, with grey slate roof.

Parapetted verges. Three storeys. Two windows range modern casements.

Ground floor has good early C19 shop window, with double bars, entablature, with projecting hood to centre.

WEST TILBURY
Church of St James

Grade II*

Late C11 or early C12, altered in C14 and 1879. Flint and ragstone rubble with limestone dressings. Roofs tiled.

C12 nave, largely refaced in C19, except for south wall.

One C12 window with rounded head, and remain of one C13 window. Chancel has C19 east window, with C14 splay and rear arch.

North wall has C14 window with 2 centred rear arch, not blocked, and a C19 window. Part of late C11 window above. South wall has two C19 windows incorporating some C14 detailing. North vestry and porch are 1879, incorporating much early material. West tower is also 1879.

One of the dominant landmarks of south Essex. (RCHM 2)
