



Chelmsford City Council Policy Board

13th March 2025

North Hill, Little Baddow Conservation Area

Report by:

Director or Sustainable Communities

Officer Contact:

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Purpose

The Character Appraisal and Management Plan for North Hill Little Baddow describes its character and appearance, identifies enhancement opportunities and justifies the designation of a Conservation Area, as required by primary planning legislation. Approval is sought from the Policy Board to undertake public consultation, following which a future report to Cabinet would ratify designation of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation

1. The Board approve the North Hill Little Baddow Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan to be published for consultation.
 2. The Board delegates the responsibility to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to make any minor changes required to the document prior to publication for consultation.
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1. Background

- 1.1. As part of the Local Plan review Little Baddow Parish Council approached the council to consider designating a number of Conservation Areas. This report brings forward North Hill to be designated as a Conservation Area.
- 1.2. Conservation Areas are '*areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes various duties on local authorities to designate, review and enhance Conservation Areas.
- 1.3. Conservation Areas are the Council's primary tool in recognising the heritage importance of areas. The interest of a Conservation Area is not purely based on its buildings and spaces, but also the contribution of uses, boundaries, thoroughfares, materials, landscape, trees and views all creating a sense of place.
- 1.4. A character appraisal is used to clearly define the distinctive character of an area in order to justify its boundaries, define its specific qualities and inform proposals for enhancement.
- 1.5. Adopted Local Plan policy S3 includes a requirement to protect and enhance the historic environment, as well as a commitment that '*the Council will designate and keep under review Conservation Areas in order to preserve or enhance their special architectural or historic interest with an emphasis on retaining and where appropriate improving the buildings and/or features that make a positive contribution to their character or appearance*'. Local Plan policy DM13 sets out criteria to assess demolition and development proposals within Conservation Areas in order to protect their character.
- 1.6. Conservation Area designation places firmer controls over development and includes protection of trees. Any development within a Conservation Area is subject to the statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character of the area.

2. Consultation Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

- 2.1. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (as appended to this report) defines the special character of the area and assess its special interest.
- 2.2. The special character of North Hill is summarised as '*Little Baddow is a dispersed rural settlement within a wooded landscape. The hall and parish church are located to the northeast. North Hill developed as a series of individual houses and hamlets adjacent the road junctions and the ancient commons at Wick Hay Green and Warren Common, on a packhorse route.*

From the early nineteenth century further linear development occurred, with infill in the twentieth century. The traditional buildings are mostly constructed of timber frame with plastered or weatherboarded walls. The landscape setting is an ever-present feature, with extensive views northwards across the valley and a rural character. The wider setting of the Conservation Area is open and wooded countryside. A high standard of maintenance in the public and private realms contributes to the attractiveness of the Conservation Area.'

- 2.3. The appraisal identifies the historic core of the settlement comprising the of historic buildings along North Hill, including the group of listed buildings at the northern end, as well as Warren Farm and the important open spaces to the east and west of North Hill as having sufficient special interest to warrant the designation of a Conservation Area.
- 2.4. Designation of a Conservation Area would reduce residents' range of permitted development rights to undertake extensions and alterations, and also works to trees. This may be seen as a constraint, but also gives greater protection of an owners setting. The designation would place duties on statutory undertakers to consider the special character of the area.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. Pending approval, the Appraisal and Management Plan would be subject to public consultation with local residents and stakeholders.
- 3.2. Following any necessary amendments, the final designation of a Conservation Area would be subject to approval by the Councils Cabinet.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The Council have a statutory duty to review and designate areas of special architectural or historic interest, a requirement also reflected in the adopted Local Plan.
- 4.2. The Parish Council have requested the area is considered for designation as a Conservation Area.
- 4.3. North Hill and the adjacent areas have a distinct character which is considered to have sufficient special interest to warrant designation of a Conservation, as set out within the appraisal.

List of appendices: North Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Background papers: None

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional:

Satisfies the councils statutory duty to review and designate Conservation Areas.

Financial:

Minor costs associated with consultation, publication and notification.

Potential impact on climate change and the environment:

Provides greater protection over trees and historic buildings. Minor positive impact.

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030:

Protection of trees. Minor positive impact.

Personnel:

Potentially a small number of additional planning applications for development that would otherwise be permitted development, to be dealt within existing planning staff caseload.

Risk Management:

There are no specific risk issues.

Equality and Diversity:

None

Health and Safety:

None

Digital:

Update existing website and GIS records.

Other:

None

Consultees:

Public consultation to be undertaken with residents and stakeholders as the next stage.

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Local Plan strategic policy S3 – to preserve and enhance the historic environment and to review and designate Conservation Areas.



NORTH HILL LITTLE BADDOW

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

February 2025

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA	12
Purpose of this appraisal	1	Traffic and Parking	12
Conservation Areas	1	Development Pressure	12
National Policy	1	Public Realm	12
Local Policies	1	Boundaries	13
Planning Guidance	2	Trees, Hedges and Landscaping	13
Statutory Designations	2	The Conservation Area Boundary	13
		Further Planning Controls	13
CHARACTER STATEMENT	4	GLOSSARY	14
Origins and Development	4	REFERENCES	15
TOPOGRAPHY, STREET PLAN AND SPACES	6	APPENDIX 1 – LISTED BUILDINGS	16
Materials and Detailing	6	APPENDIX 2 – BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST	17
USE OF BUILDINGS AND SPACES	7		
Age of Buildings	7		
Views and Focal Points	7		
CHARACTER AREAS	8		
North Hill North	8		
North Hill South	9		
Summary	10		
Proposed Boundary	11		

INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines them as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Ch VI, ss 69-80). This legislation says that Local Authorities have a duty to designate Conservation Areas, to formulate policies for their preservation and enhancement, and to keep them under review.

Unlike other forms of designation, Conservation Areas are concerned with the quality and condition of places and the wider built environment, rather than particular buildings or sites. Crucial to them are not just individual buildings, but the spaces between buildings, trees, views, public realm, architectural character and materials, street frontages and shop fronts. These factors combine to bestow the Conservation Area, or its various parts, with a distinct character, the existence of which will justify its designation. The wider setting of a conservation area, including views into and out of it, is also essential to the preservation of its character.

Purpose of this appraisal

As part of the Local Plan review the Parish Council has requested that North Hill is given consideration for designation as a Conservation Area. The Parish Council commissioned a heritage professional to assess the area's history and character, making recommendations for the area to be covered. This character appraisal makes a more detailed assessment of the area, in order to define its special character.

The scope of the appraisal includes assessment of the adjoining areas. Some aspects of the area contribute to the special character, for which the Conservation Area designation is justified, some have a neutral effect, and

some may detract from the area. These will be identified to help further the planning aim to 'preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area'. The designation is not purely to protect existing buildings or spaces, but to allow understanding of its importance to inform its future.

The aims of the appraisal are:

- Define the special character of the area, justifying the designation of a Conservation Area.
- To raise awareness amongst property owners, occupants and the general public of the heritage importance of the area.
- To help inform owners, occupiers, professionals and developers when they propose alterations, extensions and redevelopment.
- To inform Chelmsford City councillors and officers when determining planning applications.
- To inform Essex County Council, as highway authority, when making proposals.

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are 'areas 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 (the Act).

Designation of a Conservation Area places firmer planning controls over certain types of development, including extensions, claddings, the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees. It does not prevent any change to an area, and it may be subject to many pressures, both good and bad, that will affect its character and appearance. Some minor works to dwelling houses benefit from permitted development rights, but significant works require planning permission. In addition to this, some of the buildings are listed and any internal or external alterations therefore require Listed Building Consent.

Chelmsford City Council, as the local planning authority (LPA), has a duty to designate areas of special character as Conservation Areas. Once designated, the LPA has various duties imposed by the Act, including considering the special character of the area in planning decisions and formulating proposals for enhancement.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework provides a national policy on the designation and enhancement opportunities within Conservation Areas:

'When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.' (NPPF paragraph 204)

Paragraph 219 provides the requirement to look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas 'to enhance or better reveal their significance' when considering development proposals.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also provides requirements with regards to Conservation Areas. Section 69 (2) requires local authorities to review their areas for locations of special character. Section 71 requires the LPA to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and consult the public in the area in question; taking into account the views expressed.

Local Policy

Chelmsford City Council's Local Plan (adopted May 2020) sets out the policy basis for change in the area. Strategic Policy S3 states the requirement to conserve and enhance (where appropriate) the historic environment. Within this policy the Council also has the requirement to designate and keep under review Conservation Areas in

order to preserve or enhance their special architectural or historic interest, with an emphasis on retaining and where appropriate improving the buildings and/or features that make a positive contribution to their character or appearance.

Policy DM13 Section C provides requirements with regards to development and demolition within Conservation Areas. This section of the policy is used when determining permission for planning applications within a Conservation Area.

Policy DM14 protects non-designated heritage assets; these buildings are identified by the Council's Register of Buildings of Local Value. The purpose of this policy is to avoid or minimise the harm to non-designated heritage assets from new development proposals.

Policy DM15 refers to the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest and their setting.

With regards to the protection of trees within the Conservation Area, Policy DM17 applies to trees, woodland and landscape features. As a result of this policy proposals cannot cause unacceptable harm to trees within the Conservation Area. This also applies to trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

Policy DM23 ensures proposed development consists of high quality and inclusive design. This must be compatible with its surroundings with regards to scale, siting, form, architecture, materials, boundary treatments and landscape and ensures any new developments are kept in character with the Conservation Area.

In August 2023 Chelmsford City Council adopted the Little Baddow Neighbourhood Plan, which includes policies for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

Planning Guidance

The Making Places Supplementary Planning Document (January 2021) provides guidance on design within development proposals for different areas, including the

built environment. This guidance covers development affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets, listed buildings and Conservation Areas.

The Historic England Conservation Areas Management and Designation Advice Note 1 provides guidance regarding the identification, designation and management of Conservation Areas including the appraisal and enhancement of these areas. It sets out the different types of special architectural and historic interest which have led to designation including;

- areas with a high number of nationally or locally designated heritage assets and a variety of architectural styles and historic associations
- those linked to a particular individual, industry, custom or pastime with a particular local interest
- where an earlier, historically significant, layout is visible in the modern street pattern
- where a particular style of architecture or traditional building materials predominate
- areas designated because of the quality of the public realm or a spatial element, such as a design form or settlement pattern, green spaces which are an essential component of a wider historic area, and historic parks and gardens and other designed landscapes, including those included on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic interest

Conservation Area designation is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape (agricultural use of land falls outside the planning framework and is not affected by designation as a conservation area) but it can protect open areas particularly where the character and appearance concerns historic fabric, to which the principal protection offered by Conservation Area designation relates (para 73).

Statutory Designations

Little Baddow Parish contains 37 listed buildings, a Registered Park and Garden at Riffhams (partly within Danbury Parish) and 10 Protected Lanes. There are no

Scheduled Monuments. The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area between Chelmsford and Heybridge runs through the northern part of the parish. There is currently no other Conservation Area within the parish.



Fig. 1 Paper Mill Lock, within the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area

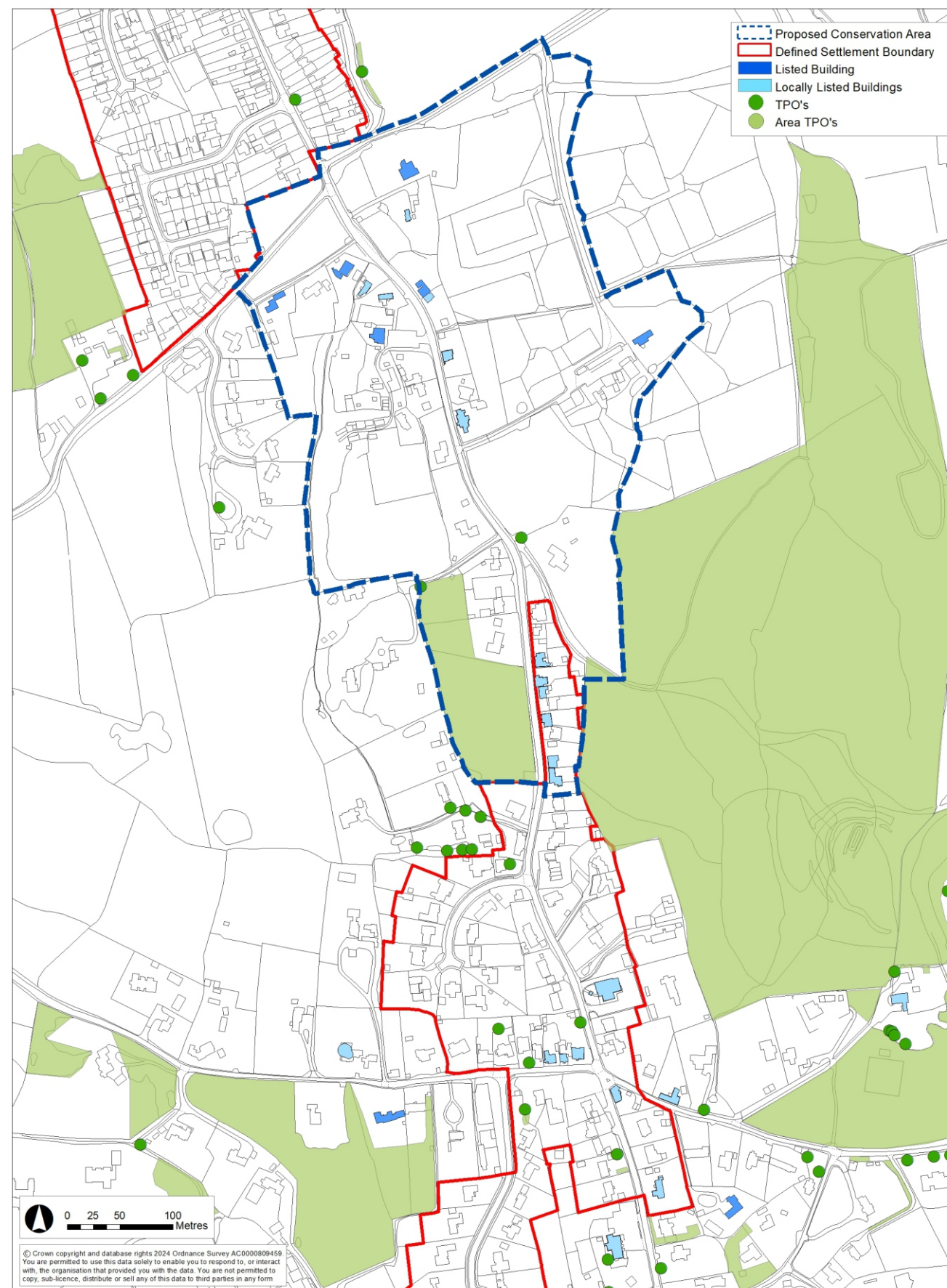
Within the area proposed for designation as a Conservation Area there are 6 grade II listed buildings. The buildings were all listed in 1975 and the list descriptions give only a brief description (see Appendix 1) for identification purposes.

There are 14 building of local interest within the area, which line North Hill, primarily dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Appendix 2).

There are no scheduled monuments or registered landscapes. The eastern side of North Hill heading south from Holly Cottage, is within the defined settlement. The remainder of the area to the north is beyond the defined settlement, where there is a presumption against development to prevent urban sprawl, except in certain limited circumstances.

Scrub Wood and Heather Hills to the east of North Hill are designated as local wildlife sites, open space and also covered by group Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). Some individual trees to the south of the area are covered by TPO's. However, trees enjoy protection in as much as anyone carrying out works to a tree in a Conservation Area must give written notification to the local planning department at least six weeks beforehand. The public footpaths on the east side of North Hill provide access to Scrub Wood, Heather Hills and towards Warren Farm.

Fig. 2 Map showing the Conservation Area boundary, the Defined Settlement boundary, listed buildings, locally listed buildings, tree preservation orders and public footpaths.



CHARACTER STATEMENT

Little Baddow is a dispersed rural settlement within a wooded landscape. The hall and parish church are located to the northeast. North Hill developed as a series of individual houses and hamlets adjacent to the road junctions and the ancient commons at Wick Hay Green and Warren Common, on a packhorse route. From the early nineteenth century further linear development occurred, with infill in the twentieth century. The traditional buildings are mostly constructed of timber frame with plastered or weatherboarded walls. The landscape setting is an ever-present feature, with extensive views northwards across the valley and a rural character. The wider setting of the Conservation Area is open and wooded countryside. A high standard of maintenance in the public and private realms contributes to the attractiveness of the Conservation Area.

Origins and Development

The name Baddow is believed to have been derived from the River Beadwan, now known as the River Chelmer, which marks the northern boundary of the parish. Beadwan is thought to be a Celtic word of uncertain meaning, possibly "birch stream" or a reference to the goddess Badbh.

Little Baddow occupies a ridge of high ground formed of glaciofluvial sand and gravel over exposed London clay giving gravelly and pebbly soils which have left a landscape consisting historically of woodland, commons, greens and heaths. The River Chelmer has cut a valley and created sloping ground up towards the south, North Hill being a dramatic ascent at the northern end of the village towards Danbury.

There is some evidence of prehistoric activity in the area, including a stone axe head on North Hill, a stone mace head near Phillows Farm and a knapped flint near St

Mary's Church, each dating from the Stone Age. Parts of axe heads and sickle blades found near Chapel Lane and New Lodge Chase date from the Bronze Age. There is an iron age earthwork at Heather Hills, east of North Hill. Within the Chelmer valley to the north are a number of cropmarks indicating ring ditches, rectangular and irregular enclosures, as well as historic field boundaries. These are of various dates, but include Bronze Age features. A Roman coin was found at Graces Walk and re-used Roman materials are present at St Marys Church.



Fig. 3 St Marys Church

It is believed, that from the 3rd Century the Celts, occupied the high ground overlooking the river which was navigable as far as Little Baddow. They are likely to have still been in residence when the Romans built a small farm near to where St Mary's Church now stands, and possibly still there when the Saxons settled the lower land, establishing a watermill and a row of farms parallel with the river, some of which still exist today.

After the Norman Conquest the village was divided into at least four manors – Baddow Hall, Middlemead (later divided into Tofts and Bassets), Riffhams and Graces. It was probably Germund, Lord of Badwen manor, who began building the Parish Church in around 1086.

In the Middle Ages further settlements were established as the population increased. The largest of these was Wickhay Green, now the site of most of the modern village, which is situated almost a mile from the church.

The present Cock Farmhouse dates from the late eighteenth century, but is on an older site – beer was brewed there by 1475 and before 1614 there was an alehouse.



Fig. 4 Little Baddow from the 1777 Chapman and André map of Essex

In 1797 the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation opened to link Chelmsford with the coastal trading ships that unloaded at Heybridge. Used commercially for transporting coal and timber until 1972, it supported two mills – for grinding corn and papermaking, until the turn of the 20th century. Little Baddow was the halfway stopover

point between Chelmsford and Heybridge, with the bargemen sleeping in the Bothy and stabling provided for their horses. Since commercial traffic ended in the 1970s, the canal opened for pleasure craft and is a popular visitor destination.



Fig. 5 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, surveyed 1895, published 1897.

The population at the time of the Norman Conquest is estimated to have been between 100 and 150. Although it rose over the centuries that followed, in the 1901 census it was still only 510. The greatest increase in population (now around 1500) came during the second half of the twentieth century but the pattern of the village remains the same.

Agriculture remained the principal occupation of the village until the 20th century, when the availability of land for development and improved transport links made Little Baddow attractive for commuters.



Figs. 6 and 7 Bill Marsh the roadman c.1920 and the school in the late nineteenth century (copyright Little Baddow Heritage Centre).



Figs. 8 and 9 View down North Hill from adjacent to the post office towards the school (now St Andrews) c.1960 (Copyright Francis Frith Collection) and The Rodney Inn in the early twentieth century (copyright Little Baddow Heritage Centre).

TOPOGRAPHY, STREET PLAN AND SPACES

Little Baddow is a dispersed rural settlement within a wooded landscape. The hall and parish church are located to the northeast. North Hill developed as a series of individual houses and hamlets adjacent to the road junctions and the ancient commons at Wick Hay Green and Warren Common, on a packhorse route.

Danbury Ridge rises sharply from the Middle Chelmer Valley and land to the south east to form one of the highest points in Essex at around 107 metres AOD. The surface geology is largely glaciofluvial sand and gravel over exposed London clay.

Small hamlets developed around the staggered crossroads at North Hill, Colam Lane and Spring Elms Lane, as well as North Hill, Holybread Lane and Tofts Chase, with commercial activity including inns, the post office and shops. These routes were secondary to North Hill, but provided an important connection to St Mary's Church and on towards Boreham to the northwest and eastward towards Maldon.

The Chapman and André 1777 county map (fig.2) shows large areas of common land, ancient woodlands and farmland. On this map, North Hill passes through the wastes of the common. By the end of the 19th century, the common had been largely enclosed. Today, much of it either side of North Hill remains wooded.

North Hill prospered as a busy packhorse route, giving an alternative to the steeper and heavily rutted and potholed route between Maldon and Chelmsford, through Danbury.

There are minor lanes, private driveways and public footpaths which run off of North Hill which are narrow, bound by hedges and rural character. Gravy Lane takes its name from the slurry which ran downhill from the farm at the top.

There is no public open space within the area, but there is an extensive network of public footpaths and publicly accessible woodlands nearby. Towards the top of North Hill there is a tree seat on the west side and midway down there is a bench on the east side.

The wider landscape setting is of woodland and pasture, providing a strong sense of place. In views across the valley from the north, the hillside is well wooded and the snaking line of North Hill and cottages, a modest feature within a treed setting, can be seen.

Materials and Detailing

The majority of the traditional buildings within the area are constructed of timber frame clad in either render or timber weatherboard. Render is mostly white or cream and boarding white or black. The eighteenth-century Walter Cottage is constructed of brick in a classical style, a wealthy exception of the period. Brick was used occasionally in the nineteenth, as it became more affordable and transport improved, but timber frame persisted until the late nineteenth century. Red brick is more common, with Gault brick only occasionally used (i.e. Yew Hedges and the chimney at The Return).

Roofs are generally steeply pitched and clad in clay plain tiles, until slate became more widely available from the mid-nineteenth century. Roof forms are generally simple with gables, but there are also examples of gambrel and hipped roofs. Chimney stacks add interest to the roofscape and are usually of red brick, positioned centrally or to end walls.

Windows are a mixture of sashes and casements, often divided into small panes with glazing bars. Painted timber windows are common, but there are some UPVC replacements. Windows are often sheltered by sloping timber pentice boards to their heads.



Fig. 10 57 North Hill and The Return. A Mixture of traditional materials and detailing. Both buildings had weatherboard in the past.

Boundary treatments are mostly native mixed hedges, complementing the green character of the village. White painted picket fences are a feature of the area. There are occasionally railings or post and rail fences, generally low and with planting. There are a few brick walls, which are overly urban in character. Driveways tend to be modest in size, narrow and screened with hedging, often surfaced in gravel or tumbled blocks.

USE OF BUILDINGS AND SPACES

Little Baddow is essentially a residential village, but has a mixture of local facilities including a parish memorial hall, churches, history centre, and cricket club. On North Hill there is The Rodney public house and St Andrews Church and hall. There are remnants of former uses in names and history archives, indicating a number of pubs, shops and services. The mix of non-residential uses contributes to the vitality and character of the local area.

Age of Buildings

The earliest building is Warren Farmhouse of the mid-sixteenth century. Pilgrims and The Rodney Inn both originate from the seventeenth century. They form part of a group with other eighteenth and early nineteenth century buildings at the northern end of North Hill, close to Holybread Lane to the south of what was Wickhay Common.



Fig. 11 The Rodney c.1960

Further south on North Hill, past the track to Heather Hills, there is a group of cottages dating from the nineteenth century. There are numerous nineteenth century cottages reflecting infilling on common land, some with narrow plots where the scrub land of the common was developed. In the second half of the twentieth century there has been much infill development on North Hill and expansion at Jarvis Field and Spring Close to the north, and High Pasture to the south.

Views and Focal Points

Long distance views are available from the north across the river valley, where the wooded hillside is the main feature, with buildings being inconspicuous.

The route down North Hill gives views out over countryside across the valley. The sinuous form of North Hill means that views are everchanging – enclosed, then opening up, providing constant interest. The open field adjacent to Wood Haven provides extensive views to Warren Farm and across the valley.



Fig. 12 View to Warren Farm

Good views over the river valley are also available from Toft Chase, where the wider rural context of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation is important.

The road junctions and the green verge adjacent to Cock Farm, Wood Haven and The Rodney provide minor focal points.



Fig. 13 Cock Farm

There are excellent views from North Hill where Cock Farm is an important feature and there is a varied and interest roofscape, similarly approached in reverse from the grounds of The Rodney.

Warren Farm is a key feature on the east side of North Hill, visible on the approaches from the west and north. To the north of Warren Farm there are views toward Tofts to the east and northward to the river valley.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

North Hill North

The area is approached from the north passing Paper Mill Lock with the ground gently rising up on the route towards Danbury, before gradually becoming steeper. When passing Wickhay Cottages, a group of mature trees flank the road and Cock Farm, with the adjacent group of buildings become visible in the distance.

Tofts Chase is an ancient lane leading on towards isolated farmsteads within a rural landscape. The first section is well defined by mature trees and the northern edge of the grounds to Walters Cottage, enclosed by a well detailed brick garden wall. Further east, expansive views open up across the river valley and down toward the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation, an important feature of the rural setting.



Fig.14 The view west along Tofts Chase, the garden wall to Little Walters and important trees.



Fig. 15 View from Tofts Chase north over the Chelmer Valley towards the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation.

Holybread Lane leads onto St Marys Church 1.3km to the west, a historically important route linking the dispersed village to the parish church. The first section of the lane within the identified area is narrow and enclosed by hedges, the adjacent fields providing a rural setting. There are glimpsed views toward Pilgrims and its thatched barn. Travelling east along the lane there are good views (particularly in winters months) toward Walters Cottage, its formal Georgian frontage and large garden provide some status.



Fig.16 Walters Cottage set within extensive grounds

Throughout the identified area, tall hedgerows of traditional native species (blackthorn, hazel, wych elm and hawthorn) are augmented by well established oaks, limes and horse chestnut trees. Trees play an important role in defining and embellishing the setting of the principal buildings in the area and forming its general character. Seasonal variation in the views through, into and out of the area throughout the year is considerable, adding greatly to variety and interest and overall aesthetic value, which is high.

The North Hill area is characterised by deeply hemmed in country lanes of verdant character though with the added drama of an undulating hillside. There is a more coherent sense of community in the form of a closely spaced grouping of houses, organically and incidentally planned. The main views are those aligned with North Hill and Holybread Lane. From the northern part of the North Hill, the elevated views take in the varied and interesting roofscape of this part of the village. Gravy Lane and the area around Pilgrims adds to the distinct village character and is not undermined by the presence of more modern housing to the west (Rysley).



Fig.17 Pilgrims and its thatched barn, Gravy Lane leading down to North Hill

Open space is also important, particularly the apron of meadow to the front of Cock Farm, with its picket fence behind, and the former allotments to the north of Gravy Lane. The latter is enclosed by field hedges and a good number of oak trees to Holybread Lane. The paddock beyond Holybread Lane also forms part of this attractive sequence of green open spaces. These contribute positively to the appearance of the area as well as to an understanding of its historic development.

The sinuous course of North Hill, Holybread Lane and Tofts Chase creates revealed views of some distinction towards both individual buildings and the various groups.

The principal historic buildings are often augmented by timber clad or brick ancillary structures. These provide a pleasing foil to the buildings of greater architectural interest, for example the thatched barn to the east of Pilgrims.

The network of public footpaths in and around the North Hill area provide a different experience to that seen from the main roads, passing through woodland belts and the fields around Warren Farm. These routes provide interesting views eastwards towards Tofts (grade II listed) across farmland, park and ornamental grounds. There are also glimpse views towards the cottages on North Hill set on lower ground.

Cock Farm, Pilgrims, Pledgers Cottage, Fern Cottage, The Rodney the adjacent cottages are a picturesque group of buildings within a landscape setting with a varied roofscape.



Fig.18 View towards Cock Farmhouse and beyond (winter)



Fig.19 View towards Cock Farmhouse and beyond (summer)



Fig.20 Cottage roofscape, looking north from the grounds of The Rodney

North Hill South

The identified area of North Hill is a continuation of The Ridge from the south. This road forms the main spine through Little Baddow running north to south, linking the village with Danbury in the latter direction. Dispersed and irregular housing of various periods and individual character epitomises the development along North Hill to the south of the identified area.

The first section of North Hill when approaching from the south has a mixture of building types, but with a more built-up character than further north. When St Andrews Church is reached there is a picturesque group of cottages of varied character. Yew Hedges was used as the school from 1846, before St Andrews was built as the National School for girls and boys, in 1851 for 70 pupils and enlarged in 1895. The building has steep roofs and red brick walls with mouldings to the openings. The church and hall use adds to the vitality of the area. Parking overflows the site at busy times and is visually intrusive.

Further south the group of cottages has a varied character, with changes in building line and materials. There is a consistent modest scale and landscape setting, with a woodland backdrop to the east.

On the west side there is a woodland setting, giving a strong rural character, with an important roadside hedge and fine specimen trees. This site comprises a patch of undulating rough grassland, with scattered trees and a strip of woodland along the rear boundary. Its undeveloped nature contrasts with the houses and gardens around its boundaries. The land slopes steeply away from the road, and then rises up, forming a small valley. The woodland to the rear, and the housing to either side, create a pleasant sense of enclosure. Together, these characteristics combine to form a strikingly attractive composition, which is seen in the series of views and glimpses obtained from North Hill, including from the public bench adjacent to the site's south-east corner.

Further north, buildings are set within a landscape setting and the open and treed area up to the brook on the west provide an important rural setting. There are occasional modern buildings, which respond to local character with varying success.

There is a break in the pattern of development north of Wood Haven, where there is open farmland on the east side, offering fine views over the valley and reinforcing the strong rural character of the area.

The rising topography allows far reaching views to the north as one descends North Hill, notably alongside the expanse of open farmland at Warren Farm (Figure 12). A bench has been placed in a position in this vicinity where the vista can be taken in and appreciated at leisure.



Fig.21 View north along North Hill, in the vicinity of The Ridings

Further north, there is a group of cottages again of varied character. The slope downhill provides an interesting roofscape and distinctive views. The meandering form of the road and hedged boundaries play an important role in providing interest and enclosure, reinforcing the rural character.



Fig.22 Warren Cottage, historic view down North Hill (copyright Little Baddow Heritage Centre)



Fig.23 Warren Cottage, recent view (Google images) compare to figure 22.



Fig.24 Hill Cottage and Florence Cottage Mid-nineteenth century.

57 North Hill acts as a focal point in the distance where North Hill turns. The former public house and shop set within a well treed setting.

The open lawn outside The Rodney and the smaller triangular green outside Cock Farm provide important settings to these buildings.

On the east side, Warren Farm is approached by a narrow track opposite Lower Pightle. The group of modern and traditional farm buildings emerge in the distance set around a courtyard, with the mid-sixteenth century farmhouse beyond. To the north another track provides access via Tofts Chase. The land provides an important rural setting to North Hill and Warren Farm, including a sequence of fine views and a number of important trees.



Fig. 25 Warren Farm viewed from the northwest.

Summary

History

- Earliest buildings dating from the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
- Historic pack horse route
- Infill and expansion from the nineteenth century
- Common and woodland

Key characteristics

- High standard of maintenance
- Sinuous curving road
- Landscape dominates
- Views across the valley
- Hedged boundaries, picket fences and mature trees
- Modest buildings within a landscape setting
- Mainly residential uses, also with The Rodney and St Andrews Church
- Render and timber weatherboard
- Orange clay plain tiles and slate roofs
- Ancillary scale outbuildings

Buildings and spaces

- Mixture of cottages of various ages
- Spaces between buildings and landscape setting reinforce rural character
- Important green spaces to the front of Cock Farm and The Rodney

Public Realm

- Verges and small green spaces
- Highway
- Extensive footpaths and woodland beyond

Opportunities for enhancement

- Boundaries
- Landscaping
- Management of future change

Proposed boundary

The proposed boundary takes in the historic core of North Hill lining the road and also the significant open spaces to the east and west.

The northern boundary excludes the modern development at Jarvis Field and Wickhay Cottages. The verge and trees on the north side of Tofts Chase and the paddocks, hedges and trees flanking Holybread Lane are included. The modern development to the north forms a defined boundary where the strong rural character changes.

To the south St Andrews Church is the outer extent. Beyond this point the houses are more closely grouped, predominantly modern and the landscape setting is less dominant. This change in character marks a logical termination of the boundary.

To the east Warren Farm and the adjacent paddocks and fields are included as a historic farmstead and important part of the rural setting. To the west the woodlands and open space are included up to the modern development at Rysley and High Pasture.

To both the east and west the rural landscape extends further, but there is a need to provide a boundary which includes the land which makes the greatest contribution to the character of the area, defined by logical features on the ground.



Fig. 26 Aerial view of proposed Conservation Area

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Traffic and Parking

Highway signage and road markings are minimal within the area, reflecting its rural character. It is important that future highway works continue to be discreet and minimal.

The majority of houses have on plot parking. This is often to the sides of buildings with narrow driveways and hedged boundaries, with minimal impact on the wider streetscape. Where wider frontage parking is created this has a greater visual impact and erodes the rural setting. Where possible native hedged boundaries should be maintained, parking areas with narrow accesses and surfaces reflecting the rural character (such as bound gravel).

Little Baddow has no notable village gateways at present, as are found at other historic Essex villages. There could be a gateway to North Hill and/or the parish itself to reinforce legibility and local distinctiveness, as well as providing traffic calming.



Figs 27 and 28 Village gateway examples

Development Pressure

Old photographs show that there has been little change on North Hill over the last 100 years. Most of the recent change in the area has been in the form of new houses from the latter twentieth century. There is pressure for new development, extensions, alterations and outbuildings.

New development should acknowledge its context and take that as its starting point. The most significant green spaces, including private gardens, should be protected from development. Alterations and extensions, as well as any new build, should be carried out to a high standard of design, as required by local and national planning policies. Account should be taken of the materials and features of the Conservation Area which contribute strongly to its character. Design criteria are set out in the Neighbourhood Plan and its Design Guide.

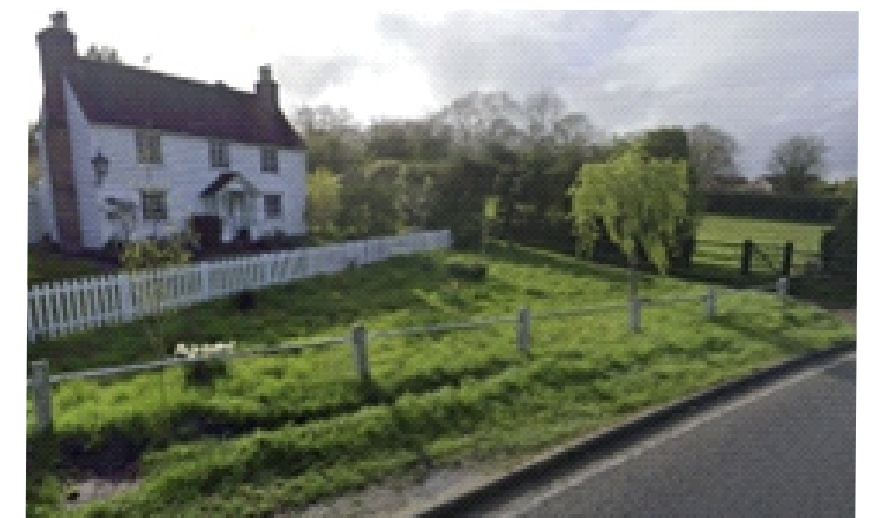
Public Realm

There is limited public open space within the area, although there is an extensive network of public footpaths and publicly accessible woodland in the locality.

Two small green spaces flank the road adjacent to Wood Haven and Cock Farm. At Wood Haven there is a public footpath post and sign, bin, grit bin, 30mph speed sign and post, as well as a sign for Heather Hills nature reserve. These features could be rationalised. At Cock Farm there is a low railing on concrete posts which could be improved or redecorated.



Figs.29 and 30 Green spaces



There is a group of notice boards adjacent to the bus stop to the northern end of North Hill. Midway up the hill there is a bench and there is a further tree seat towards the southern end of the area. There are litter bins and road grit bins on North Hill also. Given the limited public space there is no obvious scope for further street furniture. It would be desirable to explore if another bench could be provided as a resting point midway up North Hill, if the opportunity became available. Where bins, notice boards or other features require replacement they should be sensitive to the rural setting.

A footway is provided on the east side of North Hill, which is tarmac edged with concrete kerb stones. The road surface is dressed aggregate, which gives a finish which reflects the rural setting.

Boundaries

Hedged boundaries are predominant, enclosing lanes and

gardens, which reinforces the character of the area. Picket fences are also a feature of the area. Where occasionally walls and higher fences have been used, they give a urban character.

Trees, Hedges and Landscaping

Native hedges and trees are an important part of the areas character, giving considerable seasonable variation.

New planting of native trees and hedges would provide succession planting and reinforce the rural character of the area. Where laurel hedges and conifer trees have been used, they are unsympathetic to the area and do not provide the seasonal variation of native planting.

Additional bulb planting to verges and green spaces would help to provide spring colour and local distinctiveness.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The proposed boundary takes in the historic core of North Hill lining the road and also the significant open spaces to the east and west. Review of the boundary in future, every 5 years or so, would provide the opportunity to reduce or enlarge the boundary where justified.

Further Planning controls

Conservation Areas provide limited control over unlisted buildings. They can be reinforced by Article 4 Directions which can be drafted to remove permitted development rights over such things as replacement front doors, windows, roof coverings, and external painting. These things do not at present seem to be a cause for concern in the Conservation Area. At present, such extra controls do not seem necessary, but could be considered as necessary in the future.



Fig. 31 North Hill native hedged boundary and trees

Glossary

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Article 4 direction: A direction made under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 which withdraws permitted development rights granted by that Order.

Conservation (for heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Designated heritage asset: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Historic environment record: Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.

Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

Local plan: A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

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Archives

Essex Record Office
Historic England
Chelmsford Museum
Little Baddow Heritage Centre

APPENDIX 1 – LISTED BUILDINGS

Pilgrims, Holybread Lane (grade II)

A C17 timber-framed and plastered house, renovated in the C20. It comprises a main block of 2 storeys and a rear block of 1 storey and attics. The front has C20 pargetting and C20 fenestration. The windows are casements with glazing bars. Roof tiled, the main block is gabled and the rear wing is half hipped, with 1 gabled dormer window to each side. (RCHM 9).

Cock Farmhouse, North Hill (grade II)

A late C18 or early C19 timber-framed and weatherboarded house. 2 storeys. 3 window range, double-hung sashes with glazing bars. There is a central doorway with a gabled porch. Roof tiled.

The Rodney Inn, North Hill, Fern Cottage and Cock Farmhouse with Hillside Cottage, The Return and No 57 form a group. (North Hill, Fern Cottage and Hillside Cottage are buildings of local interest).

57 North Hill (grade II)

A late C18 or early C19 timber-framed and plastered cottage adjoining The Return. 1 storey and attics. 2 window range, double-hung sashes with glazing bars. A central boarded door. Roof tiled, mansard, with 1 gabled dormer.

The Rodney Inn, North Hill, Fern Cottage and Cock Farmhouse with Hillside Cottage. The Return and No 57 form a group (North Hill, Fern Cottage and Hillside Cottage] are buildings of local interest).

The Rodney Inn, North Hill (grade II)

Originally a C17 timber-framed and plastered house, much altered in the C18 and later. Renovated in the C20. The front has roughcast panels. 2 storeys. 2 window range on both the north and east fronts. The north front has double-hung sashes with glazing bars (except for 1 C20 casement window on the ground storey). The east front has C20 casements. Roof tiled, hipped. (RCHM 7).

The Rodney Inn, North Hill, Fern Cottage and Cock Farmhouse with Hillside Cottage, The Return and No 57 form a group. (North Hill, Fern Cottage and Hillside Cottage are buildings of local interest).

Warren Farmhouse, North Hill (grade II)

House. Mid C16, extended in C17 and C19. Timber framed and plastered and under-built in brick on north front. Red plain tile roof hipped at west end. 2 storeys, T-shaped plan. 4 window range modern vertical sliding sashes and casements. C16 and C18 red brick chimney stacks. Brick underbuilding is in 2 stages, late C16 and C17, with flared headers in diaper pattern. Internally the original frame is virtually complete with stop chamfered beams, jowled storey posts and crown post roof.

Walters Cottage, Tofts Chase (grade II)

A C18 brick house with a parapet and a moulded string course. Now whitewashed on the front. 2 storeys. 3 window range, double-hung sashes with glazing bars, in plain reveals, with segmental arched heads. A central C20 glazed door has a doorcase, with slender plain 'Tuscan' columns and an open pediment porch. Roof tiled, double pitched, hipped.

APPENDIX 2 – BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST

St Andrews Church, North Hill

Former National School for boys and girls, now church. Built c.1851 for 70 pupils. School closed in 1960. Gable to roadside with tall window, bell and fleur de leys finial. Original building the two bay section on the north side. Red brick, with moulded arches to openings. Gabled roofs clad in clay plain tiles, stepped detail to road side verge, parapet to north end, dormer to south end. Original outbuilding to the rear.

Significance

Architectural and historic interest, community value as former school and now church

Yew Hedges, North Hill

House. Gault brick front, timber frame to the rear with plastered finish. Early nineteenth century front, eighteenth century or old core. Red brick chimney stacks to end walls. Sash windows.

Significance

Architectural and historic interest. Group value with the cottages to the north.

Stanhill, North Hill

Pair of cottages, now one house. Timber framed, late eighteenth/early nineteenth century in origin. Catslide roof to rear with dormers. Plaster and weatherboard clad walls. Central chimney stack. Modern bay windows and side extension.

Significance

Group value with the adjacent cottages.

Rose Cottage, North Hill

Cottage mid nineteenth century. Brick, now plastered. Low pitched gable roof clad in slate with large red brick chimney stack. Modern additions to the rear.

Significance

Group value with the adjacent cottages.

Coppins, North Hill

House, possibly two cottages originally. Nineteenth century. Gabled plain tiles clad roof. Roughcast rendered brick walls. Sash windows.

Significance

Group value with the adjacent cottages.

1-3 Hillside Cottage, North Hill

Three cottages. Timber framed and clad in white painted timber weatherboard. Late nineteenth century. Slate clad roofs, central porch clad in pan tiles.

Significance

Group value with the adjacent cottages.

Warren Cottage, North Hill

Timber framed cottage, eighteenth century origins. Plastered walls, plain tile clad roofs. Casements windows. Modern bay windows and side extension.

Significance

Architectural and historic interest. Group value with the adjacent cottages.

Claren Cottage, North Hill

Originally a pair of cottages, now one house. Early nineteenth century. Timber frame, with plastered walls. Hipped slate covered roof. Dormer windows to side. Leaded-light windows.

Significance

Architectural and historic interest. Group value with the adjacent cottages.

The Return, North Hill

Originally a pair of early nineteenth century timber framed cottages, now one cottage. Plastered with a slate roof and gault brick chimney stack. Casement windows. Bay window to the north elevation. Shown clad in weatherboard in photographs c.1900.

Significance

A humble cottage of vernacular construction. Group value with 57 North Hill (grade II listed), The Rodney (grade II listed), Cock Farm (grade II listed), Fern Cottage and Pledgers Cottage.

Little Walters, North Hill

Cottage of eighteenth century origins. Timber framed, plastered walls. Plain tiles clad roof. Name associated with Walter Mildmay (1523-1589).

Significance

Architectural and historic interest. Group value with Walters Cottage (grade II listed).

Pledgers Cottages, North Hill

Early nineteenth century brick cottage, now rendered. Sash windows with small panes. Plain tile clad roof with catslide to rear. Open porch to front. Bay window to side.

Significance

Architectural and historic interest. Group value with Cock Farm (grade II listed) and Fern Cottage (see below).

Fern Cottage, North Hill (adjacent to Cock Farm)

Cottage. Eighteenth century, possibility with an earlier core. Timber framed with plastered finish. Casement windows.

Significance

Architectural and historic interest. Group value with Cock Farm (grade II listed) and Pledgers Cottage (see above).

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