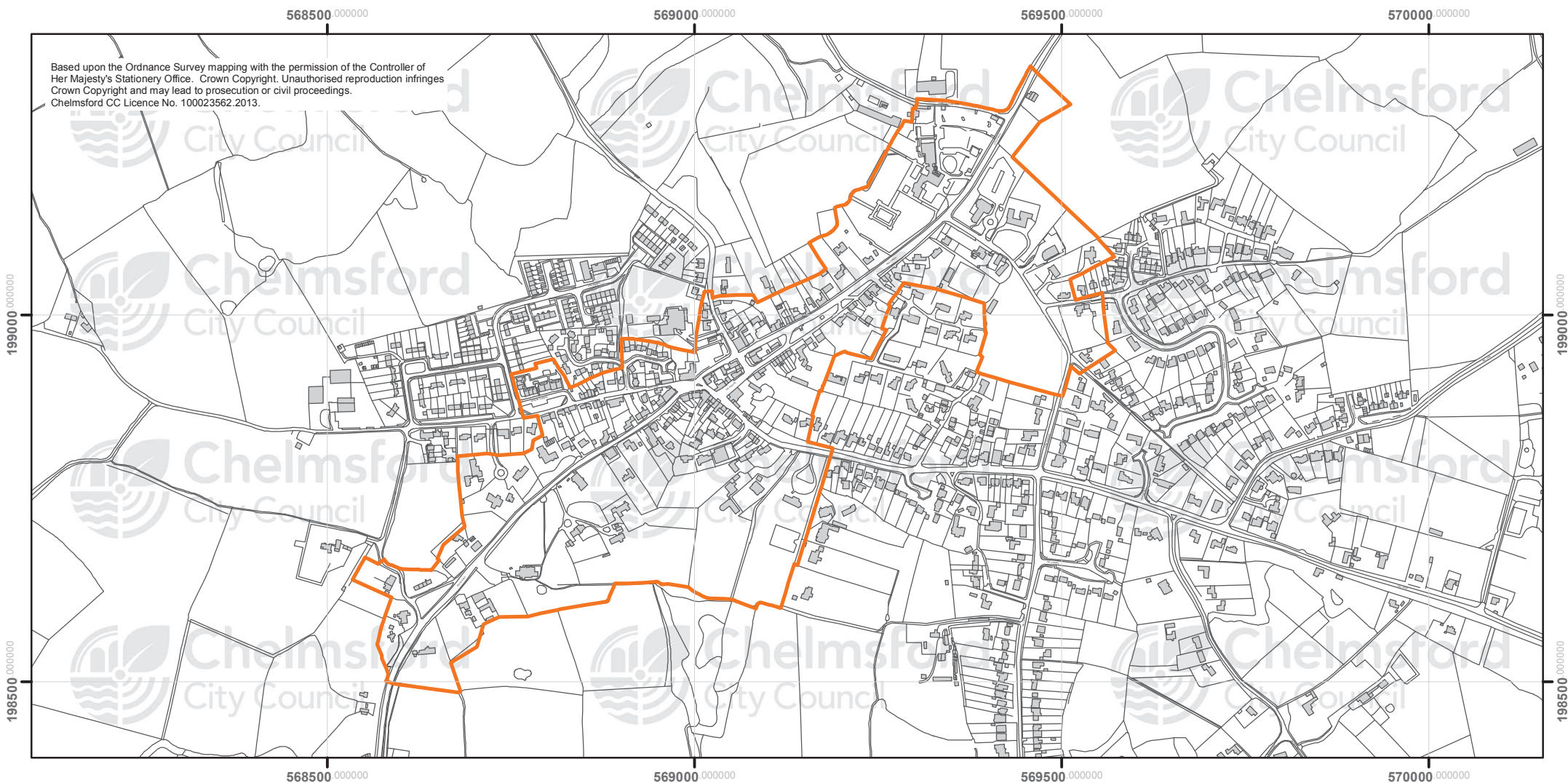


Stock Conservation Area

Reference	G010
Designated	02.10.1969
First amendment	30.04.1991

Second amendment	-
Third amendment	-
Fourth amendment	-



0 250
Metres

JULY 2013

Directorate for Sustainable Communities

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STOCK

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



The High Street and the Green, looking west

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Introduction

This appraisal was commissioned by Chelmsford City and Stock Parish Council in 2019. The research and fieldwork were carried out between September and December of that year by David Andrews, heritage consultant, in consultation with Michael Hurst of Chelmsford City Council and with Stock Parish Council.

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, views along roads, public realm, architectural character and materials, and street frontages and shop fronts. These factors combine to endow the conservation area, or its various parts, with a distinct character, the existence of which will have been the reason for 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.

Designation of a Conservation Area extends planning controls over certain types of development, principally the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees. Local authorities will also formulate policies in their local plans or local development frameworks to preserve the character of their conservation areas. However, designation does not prevent any change within conservation areas: they will be subject to many different pressures (good and bad) that will affect their character and appearance.

Planning Policies

National policy

Since 2012, government planning guidance has been set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a concise account of its aims and intentions, replacing much longer documents. It was revised in 2018 and 2019. It provides a framework for the formulation of local plans and policies and development proposals. Its objective is sustainable development in accordance with such local plans, and based on economic prosperity, social benefit and environmental protection. Emphasis is placed on the role of good design as 'a key aspect of sustainable development', creating 'better places in which to live and work' (chapter 12). Good design should 'reflect local aspirations', and be 'grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics'.

The Framework (chapter 16) treats conservation areas as part of the wider historic environment. They are considered to be a 'designated heritage asset' like listed buildings and other parts of the historic environment which have some degree of statutory protection. In caring for the historic environment, local plans should take into account:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

When determining applications, local planning authorities should consider their impact on the significance of heritage assets, including their setting. Where the impact will result in harm, that harm should be assessed against the public benefits of the proposal. In conservation areas, proposals that enhance them or better reveal their significance should be looked upon favourably.

Guidance on all aspects of conservation areas is given in Historic England's advice note Conservation area designation, appraisal and management (2019).

Local Policies

Chelmsford City's new local plan is the Local Development Framework due to be adopted in 2020. Its Strategic Objectives seek to combine managing growth with the protection and enhancement of natural and built resources, and of the historic and natural environment. Policy S5 acknowledges the City's commitment to protecting and enhancing conservation areas, and to keeping them under review; and also to protecting the character and setting

of listed buildings and registered parks and gardens. Development Control Policies HE1 and HE2 identify specific criteria for assessing applications relating to designated and non-designated heritage assets. New buildings and development must be well designed to ensure high quality and successful places, with conditions to be satisfied for the approval of applications being listed in Policies MP1 and MP2. In the Core Strategy's settlement hierarchy, Stock is a Key Defined Settlement, one with a relatively large population, good accessibility and a good range of amenities and services.

In 2011 the Parish Council published a Village Design Statement, a response to a perceived threat to the character of the village from over-development and indifferent design. This was supported by extensive public consultation, and was adopted by Chelmsford Borough as supplementary planning guidance. It contains a series of recommendations on new development and design. This document is due to be superseded by a neighbourhood plan.

All the Conservation Area is within the village development boundary, except at the eastern end around Greenwoods, and at the western end round the church.

Statutory Designations

The Stock Conservation Area was designated in 1969, and enlarged in 1991 when The Common was included. It is linear in shape, following the High Street (B1007) from Greenwoods Hotel in the north-east to All Saints parish church in the south-west, with a central focus at the cross roads with Back Lane and Mill Road, short lengths of which are included. It is thus confined to what is largely historic development along the main road, with open spaces at The Common and All Saints church, and a small area of 20th century development north of Back Lane.

There are about 36 listed buildings in the Conservation Area, mostly situated along Stock Road and the High Street. Stock was never included in the accelerated resurvey of listed buildings in the 1980s and early 1990s. Most list descriptions are no more recent than 1975. As a result they are usually very brief and potentially misleading, particularly in the case of the older timber-framed buildings.

There are no scheduled monuments and no registered landscapes. The landscaped gardens at Greenwoods are not registered but are included in the Essex Gardens Trust's Inventory of Historic Designed Landscapes in the City of Chelmsford. Beyond the defined settlement at the centre of the village, Stock is in the Metropolitan Green Belt where there is a presumption against development to prevent urban sprawl, except in certain limited circumstances. There are two buildings in Stock on Chelmsford City Council's register of Historic Buildings at Risk (2020), the barn at the Bear public house and the Rectory Hall.

Some trees are covered by Tree Protection Orders. However, trees enjoy protection inasmuch 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 only footpath in the Conservation Area is one linking Mill Road and Stock Road via the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

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Fig. 1 Map of Stock showing the Conservation Area boundary, the Defined Settlement boundary, listed buildings and tree preservation orders, footpaths and Green Belt (Chelmsford City Council)

Character Statement

Stock has grown up around a long market street, the High Street, down which there is a linear Green the remains of Stock Common, leading to an infilled marketplace at one end which has created a complex street pattern around a road junction. The High Street is lined with listed buildings, mostly late 18th to early 19th century, Georgian in style, many of them in brick, which was made locally. These houses are typically two storey, three window bay, with classical door cases and end chimneystacks. The extensive use of brick from an early date makes Stock rather unusual amongst Essex villages. There are well defined rural edges at the ends of the High Street, where housing is less dense in a setting with much open space and fine standard trees. 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.



Fig. 2 40 High Street, a typical 18th/19th century brick house

Origins and development

Stock occupies a ridge of high ground formed of Claygate Beds and Bagshot Sands overlying the London Clay, giving gravelly and pebbly soils which have left a landscape consisting historically of commons, greens and heaths. Tributaries of the river Wid have cut valleys and created sloping ground to the north- and south-west, Stock Hill being a dramatic ascent into the western end of the village.

There is some evidence of prehistoric activity in the area, such as Bronze Age and Iron Age finds from along Mill Road, east of the Conservation Area, and a Neolithic hand axe discovered on Kiln Common. South of the Conservation Area, south of Lilystone Hall, a large mound may be a prehistoric barrow. A prehistoric camp has been identified extending from the north side of Mill Road south round the Catholic church. Roman finds have been recovered from Crondon Park. In general, however, there is no known evidence for settlement until the Middle Ages. Even then, Stock is not mentioned in Domesday Book, the great survey of England drawn up by William I in 1086. At that time, it was in the parish of Buttsbury, within three of the seven Buttsbury manors, mainly in Blunts and Imphey Hall. Its secondary importance is to be seen in the place name, the element *stoc* simply meaning place. It is usually defined by the addition of another element, as in Woodstock. At Stock, it was linked to the personal name Hereward, now corrupted and giving us the modern full name Stock Harvard. The identity of this Hereward is not known. Stock is first recorded in 1232 when there is a reference to a rector of All Saints church. In 1239, Henry III granted the right to hold a Thursday market at herewardstoc to Ickleton priory in Cambridgeshire which owned the manor of Imphey Hall. Stock presumably owed its growing importance to its position on the north-south route from Chelmsford via Billericay down to the Thames crossing at East Tilbury. It is one of numerous medieval markets established on main roads which later became significant places, eclipsing the parishes in which they were located. Nearby examples are Billericay and Brentwood, towns which were originally in the parishes of Great Burstead and South Weald respectively. In the 16th century, Stock also had two annual fairs.



Fig. 3 Stock from the 1777 Chapman and André map of Essex

The village is located on high ground or plateau east of the valley of the river Wid. To the south the church stands on a spur where the land drops down to another valley. In the Middle Ages, the surroundings would have been thinly populated. It was surrounded by woods and extensive commons, Stock Common east of it, Ramsden Common to the south, and Crondon Park to the north. The latter was a large deer park belonging to the bishop of London, later partially disparked by the Petre family, now a golf course. The common was used by clayworkers who made bricks, tiles and pots. Morant, the 18th century county historian, said 'the soil is gravelly but towards the Common (which is pretty large, and almost joins with Gallow'd Common on the North, and Ramsden on the South-west), the soil is a kind of lome, called by the Inhabitants Brick and Pot Earth, because there is a kiln for each of these manufactures lying however in Buttsbury The Bricks made here are reputed the best in these parts; and the Pots are strong but a coarse ordinary ware.' Debris from pottery kilns datable to the 17th-18th centuries has been found in the area of Mill Road and Common Lane, on what was the south side of the Common. A kiln has been found under the cricket pavilion.

The village is located at an irregular cross roads, where the north-east to south-west High Street leading to Stock Hill is intersected by the east-west Mill Road and Back Lane. This junction corresponds to a low east-west ridge above the 300ft contour, land dropping away sharply to the south on Stock Hill, just beyond the church. Historically, residential development has been concentrated on the High Street and the area just south of the junction, with few houses along Mill Road and Back Lane. Comparison of the early Ordnance Survey maps shows very little change in the footprint of the village until after the 2nd World War when Mill Road, and to a lesser extent Back Lane, began to be built up. From a level which had long been around 600, the population in the later 20th century has risen to just over 2000.

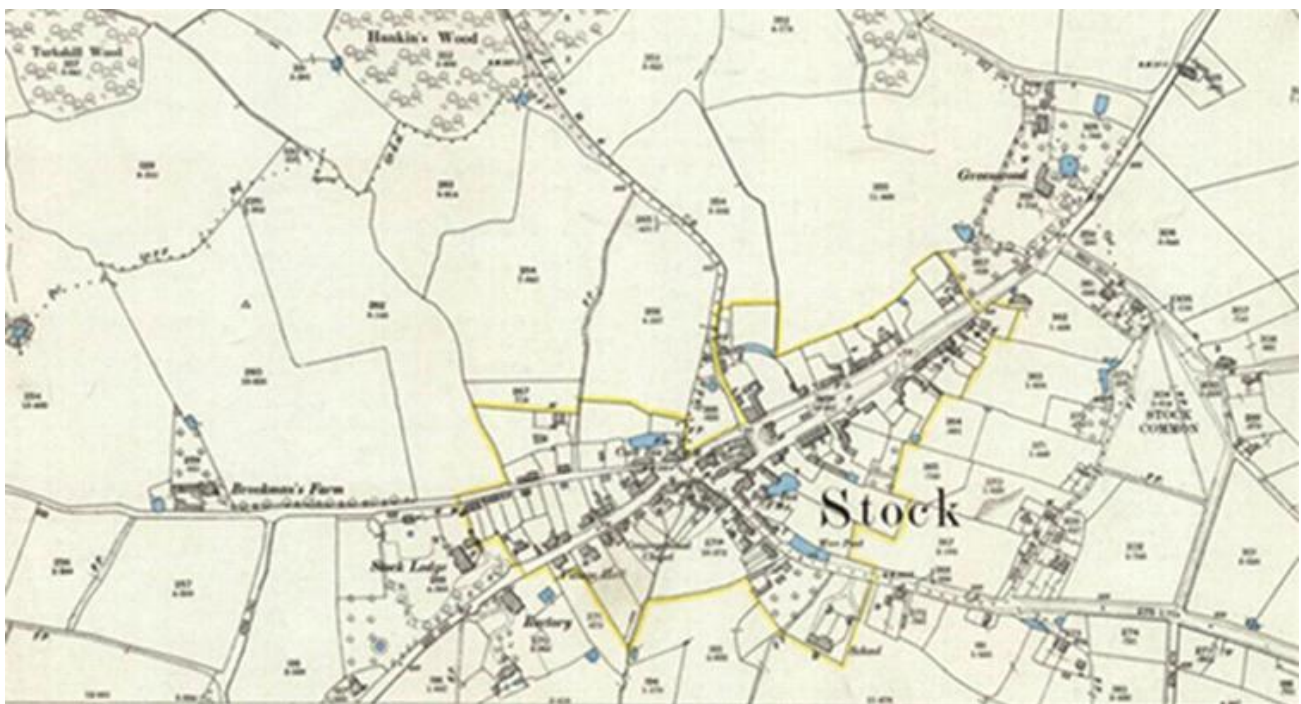


Fig. 4 Stock from the 1896 2nd edition 1:2500 map



Fig. 5 The aerial photograph of Stock today shows it densely built up along the side roads and in backland areas, a contrast with the late 19th century OS map

TOPOGRAPHY, STREET PLAN AND SPACES

Like most Essex towns and villages, Stock has grown up along a street, an intermediate stopping place between Chelmsford and Billericay on the road (now the High Street or B1007) to the Thames at Tilbury. At this point the road is running north-east to south-west. A staggered cross roads is formed by the junction with Back Lane and Mill Road which run east-west respectively, whilst slightly off-set, Swan Lane runs off to the north. These are minor roads of little historic importance, except for Back Lane which connects with the original parochial and manorial focus of Buttsbury, now reduced to an isolated church, and the Roman road or A12 at Ingatestone. Mill Road takes its name from the windmill located to the east outside the conservation area. The windmill stands on what was Stock Common, which formerly occupied an extensive area on the south side of the High Street as can be seen on the Chapman and André 1777 county map. On this map, Mill Road disappears into the wastes of the common and woodland further south. By the end of the 19th century, the common had been largely enclosed. Today, much of it either side of Mill Road is occupied by modern low density suburban development. The Common is commemorated by Common Road at the east end of the High Street, and survives now only as the open space of the cricket field.

The most distinctive feature of the village street plan is the former marketplace, which occupied a broad swathe of the common alongside the road, widening out to its focus at the road junction to the west, where the oldest buildings such as the Bear are to be found. Here the marketplace has been infilled, giving rise to an island block of buildings at what is known as The Square. Market infill in towns is a ubiquitous process, stalls becoming permanent and gradually replaced by shops and housing laid out in rows, often beginning as early as the 14th century. At Stock, the infill does not seem to include buildings that can be dated earlier than about the 17th century. The island infill block would have had

spaces and alleys between the small buildings, but today is impermeable. Its presence adjacent the main crossroads, and the end of Swan Lane, creates a rather confusing street plan when approaching from the west.

Age of Buildings

The majority of the listed buildings are assigned dates in the 18th, or 18th/early 19th centuries. The list descriptions, as has been seen, are rather summary and not always accurate, but this reflects a time when the village seems to have prospered, with much building or rebuilding in brick. It is also true that it can be difficult distinguishing buildings and brickwork erected in the decades either side of 1800. One feature potentially useful for dating brickwork are pressure marks or skintlings, there being a change from diagonal to horizontal ones usually around 1800.

The oldest known buildings tend to be concentrated at the south end of the High Street around the marketplace and road junction. Some of the buildings thought to be 18th/19th century doubtless conceal older timber frames yet to be identified, such as Tudor Cottage (52 High Street) and 12 Mill Road. There are, as everywhere, many 19th century buildings, creating more continuous built up frontages along the High Street. The 20th and 21st centuries have seen further infilling, the extension of development along Swan Lane and Back Lane, and the construction of large houses in the open green spaces at the north and south ends of the village.

Fig. 6 Indicative map showing the age of buildings. The dating of the listed buildings follows the list descriptions except in cases where they are known to be wrong

Materials and Detailing

There is little evidence of late medieval timber framed buildings in Stock, and no exposed framing. The Bear and Bellmans are quite clearly H-plan houses, with a hall flanked by two cross-wings, datable to the 16th century or earlier. Tudor House, 52 High Street, is a parlour end cross-wing with an underbuilt jetty, its origins well concealed, probably late 15th century. A number of the houses listed as 17th or 18th/19th century probably contain earlier frames. Weatherboard, as well as render, was a typical way of covering up a timber frame from the 18th century, and formerly more common in Stock than it is today. It is conspicuous at The Hoop, or 51-53 High Street where it has been used in an exemplary restoration.



Fig. 6 Swan Lane, an 18th century weatherboarded cottage, with small pane sliding sash windows

Brick, a local product, is the material that makes the most striking contribution to the character of the historic centre of Stock, present in numerous houses which can be dated broadly to the 18th/19th centuries. These are handmade bricks, of variable colour, with flared headers, sometimes used consistently to achieve a regular pattern. White or gault brick is sometimes used for detailing, or for larger houses such as Stock Lodge. Despite the attractiveness of the old brickwork, many houses have been painted. This is not an ideal way to treat brickwork, potentially trapping damp, but the general high standard of maintenance means that these properties look good. Much brickwork has suffered cement repointing, usually visually, and potentially physically, harmful, and also rather robust cleaning. A conspicuous feature of these older houses are good six panel front doors, often with simple classical door cases.



Fig. 8 18th century brickwork with regular use of flared headers. Note the diagonal skintlings

The traditional roof covering is handmade peg tile, at a steep pitch of usually around 50o, its variability in shape and colour bringing life and texture to the roofscape. On modern buildings, and on renewed roofs, they are replaced by machine made tiles which can look dull and uniform by comparison. 19th century buildings with lower pitch roofs are covered with natural slate. Pantiles and single Roman tiles have been used for outbuildings and agricultural buildings.



Fig. 9 The irregularity of handmade clay pegtiles gives life and character to roofs



Fig. 10 Single Roman tiles are commonly found on outbuildings

Chimney stacks add considerably to roofscape interest, and where placed on end walls are often important features, as at The Bear, The Harvard and 52 High Street (Tudor Cottage).

Reflecting the age of the houses, windows are mostly vertical sliding sash, small pane in the older properties, with larger panes in the 19th and 20th century ones. 20th century sash windows are often rather clumsily detailed, but at least most are timber, UPVC windows being mercifully rare. Records indicate that shutters were once common in Stock, a legacy presumably of Regency and 'picturesque' cottage architecture; some remain today.

Boundary treatments are mostly native mixed hedges, complementing the green character of the village. At the west end of the High Street, there are long stretches of brick wall, defaced with a damaging band of cement render at the bottom. White painted picket fences are an attractive feature of some parts of the conservation area. The lanes, accessible to vehicles, on the south side of the High Street, are surfaced with gravel. So too are many household drives, but recent developments tend to have large areas of block paving which can look hard and bleak, much less sympathetic and traditional.



*Fig. 11
Good driveway and
boundary treatment,
gravel retained by
granite setts, and a
picket fence*

Uses of Buildings and Spaces

Stock is essentially a residential village. It is fortunate to have a shop at the Swan Street/High Street junction, and a small cluster of shops around the south side of the Square and Mill Road. It also has a doctors' surgery and a village hall. The latter provides valuable public parking, the only in the village. Unlike other villages, public houses, three in number, seem to thrive. The mix of non-residential uses contributes to the vitality and character of the Conservation Area. There is no public park, but there is ample open space and areas of greensward, and a children's play area at the side of the cricket pitch.

Fig. 12 Map showing uses of buildings and spaces

Character Areas and Streetscape Analysis

The Conservation Area can be divided into character areas on the basis of visually unifying factors arising from the degree of open space or character and density of the built environment, combined with the age, uses and appearance of buildings. Although the boundaries between them may be somewhat arbitrary, these are useful concepts in the management and care of the Conservation Area, and should be taken into account when development is considered. The Conservation Area is described according to these character area divisions.

Fig. 13 Map showing character areas

The Common

The area around the rural edge at the north end of the High Street, and Common Road, is distinguished by much green space, tall trees, and a scatter of buildings, mostly modern ones on spacious plots. This is a situation inherited from the former Stock Common and the Greenwoods estate and its farm.

At the northern boundary of the Conservation Area, there is a terrace of three 19th century cottages at right angles to the road, cleverly extended to the rear in modern brickwork which does not do justice to that of the original frontages. Here there is a transition from open fields with long views to the almost tunnel-like entrance to the Conservation Area, flanked by high mixed hedges. 30mph signs, one combined with a village sign, announce the beginning of the village. They are supported by white painted fencing set back against the hedges which do not really look like gates. To motorists, the most striking message that they are entering somewhere special is the dark red bitumen surface used for the B1007 throughout the Conservation Area. Timber gates integrated with the speed restriction and village signs would give motorists a more coherent message

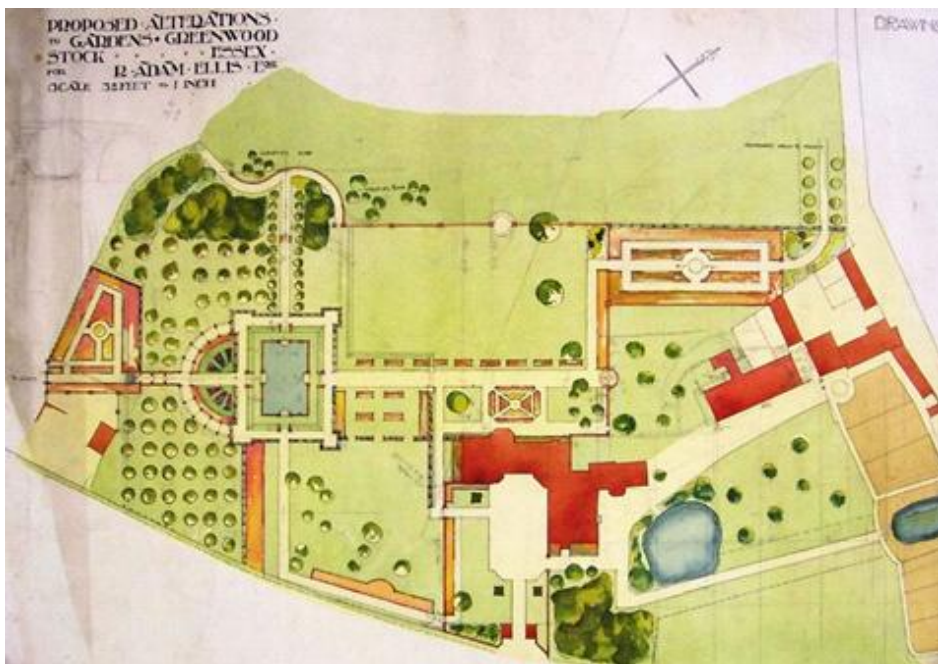


*Fig. 14
Entrance to the east
end of the
Conservation Area*

As the hedges reduce in height, but fortunately high enough to screen car parks on either side of the road, there are views on one side of the Village Hall behind a row of Scots pines, and on the other of Greenwoods Hotel. Greenwoods is an early 19th century stuccoed house on an older site, possibly containing earlier fabric. It was acquired in 1901 by Richard Ellis who added a handsome new wing in the Arts and Crafts style, with large stone windows at ground floor, and a porch in the angle with a large bay window opposite. It resembles some of the local work of the architect George Sherrin. Ellis commissioned the fashionable garden designer, Thomas Mawson, to redesign parts of the landscaped grounds in 1905, and again in 1908. Greenwoods was bought by the West Ham Central Mission in 1948, sold in 1999, and re-opened in 2001 as a hotel and spa, with an extension on the east side designed to complement the early 20th century one. It is well landscaped, as would be expected of a popular wedding venue. The general layout of Mawson's gardens survives, the most notable feature being the sunken garden, and a covered way between the house and park. The gardens are included in the Essex Gardens Trust's Inventory of Historic Designed Landscapes in the City of Chelmsford. They form part of the setting of the listed house and make a significant contribution to the Conservation Area. Signage around the entrance to Greenwoods is mostly discreet. At the entrance, the boundary is an 8 foot high brick wall with a stone coping, but to the west is a long disappointing length of close boarded fencing, gradually disappearing behind spontaneous undergrowth.



*Fig. 15
Greenwoods seen from
the High Street*



*Fig. 16
Mawson's plan for the
gardens at Greenwoods
(Cumbria Record Office)*

On the east side of Greenwoods, the boundary is an old brick wall enclosing, with an elm hedge, the narrow Crondon Park Lane leading to Greenwoods Farm, the modern buildings of which, put to a variety of uses, lie outside the Conservation Area. A particularly raw looking repair to the corner of the brick wall shows the difficulty of using reclaimed bricks if inadequately cleaned up, and lime mortar if it is not toned down and the joints not kept as narrow as possible.

Orchard Cottage, at the corner with Birch Lane, is one of the few older buildings, 19th century, with ashlar stucco, and a double pile extension. Opposite, Lushill, a rather similar 19th century building, is derelict, overgrown, and largely invisible behind overgrowth and high hedges. Its replacement with four houses will extend suburbia into this part of the Conservation Area. Bowlers, overlooking the cricket pitch, is 20th century

neo Georgian, with a white painted picket In the High Street, opposite the Greenwoods fence, are some older properties set back from the frontage: Marvells, a 20th century house behind a sweeping gravel drive with an older timber barn to one side; Lattices, with eye-catching diagonally set brick chimneys; and Little Lattices, a listed 18th century cottage, probably on a lobby-entry plan. The spacious setting, informal layout and landscaped edge give low density character on the approach to the village centre beyond.

Stock Common once extended down the south side of the High Street as far as Mill Road and beyond. Today it is reduced to the cricket pitch and areas of greensward along Common Road. The Conservation Area boundary here represents a sharp division between what has been left of a more open landscape and systematic modern suburban development of what was the Common to the east and south.



Fig. 17 View north across the cricket pitch

The cricket pitch is an unenclosed open space, giving public access, with good views across it north into the Conservation Area where there are many tall trees, notably a row of limes along the east side of the pitch, and some fine poplars on Common Road. There are numerous benches along the roadside beneath the limes. The club building is modest and not really worthy of its setting. fence, a feature typical of the Conservation Area. The British Legion occupies the brick built 19th century former British School. The Bakers Arms is a well presented building with attractive roughcast render over a timber frame of uncertain age, but probably at least 17th century. The extensive car park would be better screened if the fence at one end were replaced with a hedge. On the other side of the road, the surgery, Orchard House, a residential home, and the Village Hall, are all modern brick buildings with UPVC windows which recede into their generous well landscaped plots. The Village Hall, built with lottery funding from the Millennium Commission, has a large car park made available to the public, a much needed facility.



Fig. 18 The Bakers Arms, Common Road

The High Street east. The Green

To the west of Greenwoods, the High Street begins to be more closely built up, and on its south side preserves remains of the Common in the form of the Green, strips of greensward which become wider towards the west where the main area of the marketplace would have been. These grassed areas are important in defining the character of the centre of the village and this part of the High Street as an open green space.

On the north side of the High Street, the houses are initially set widely apart, with a building line back from the road. Copt Hall is a large 18th century house in warm brick, with a gambrel roof, prominent behind railings. The frontage then becomes once again overgrown, concealing a modern house (no. 4) located much further back, and partially obscuring a white painted 19th century house, Saffrons (no. 6), on the same building line as Copt Hall. This is a three window bay house with a flat-roofed porch supported on columns, semi-circular bay windows at the ground floor, an old extension on the right hand side, its appearance currently neglected. To the west is a brick house (no.8), the first of a type characteristic of the Conservation Area, 18th/19th century, three window bay with a classical door case. However, this one has a late 19th century extension under a gable on the left side.



Fig. 19 Jasmine Cottage and the Old Post Office

From this point on this side of the street, the building line moves right on to the frontage, the grain becomes tighter, and brick is predominant. Nos 10-12, the former post office, and no. 16, Little Harvard, are similar 18th/19th century three bay window houses, both listed and extended to the left hand side for shops. Between them, Jasmine Cottage is modern infill, a good attempt to match them in brick, only its greater height and hipped roof drawing attention to its later date. Beyond, Rose Cottage, one-and-a-half storey with a gambrel roof, its brick doubtless cladding a timber frame, and the white weatherboarded Ellis Cottages, are two rather different 18th/19th century listed buildings. There follows a change in character and architectural style. An early 20th century pair of houses, Little Court, brick with render at the first floor, and entrances under lean-to roofs at the ends, have an air of Arts and Crafts to them. They form an attractive frontage added to pre-existing buildings. The southern one has a long brick wall with a dentil course beneath the coping enclosing a garden and access to a surprising three storey terrace of late Victorian houses in white painted brick built at right angles to the street. A late 20th century house has been slipped into the backland area, barely visible from the road. The Victorian terrace backs on to the Budgens store and recently defunct post office, of similar date, in brown London stock brick, with a canted bay. Its windows are mostly UPVC, as is a particularly inappropriate front door on Swan Lane. Here there is a painted sign advertising a former proprietor which would benefit from restoration. The Swan Lane elevation is disappointing in a building in such a prominent position and warrants improvement



*Fig. 20
High Street, Little
Harvard, Swan and
Ellis Cottages, and
beyond, Little Court*



*Fig. 21
The Budgens store at
the Swan Lane
junction. This
prominent elevation
needs improvement.*

Swan Lane is a narrow country lane leading to Hankin's and Swan Woods and skirting the edge of Crondon Park, very narrow and rural but now built up with modern housing within the defined settlement boundary. There are two older buildings on the east side, no. 2, Windsor Cottage, a brick building probably originally commercial, and no. 6, a weatherboarded cottage.

On the south side of the High Street, the pavement widens into a gravelled lane, and the grass verge opens out into the Green. This public open space is informal and treated in a low key way. White painted metal posts with chains separate the lane from the greensward. Where the Green becomes wider, there are two very fine oak trees, one with a seat round its trunk. Here there is the war memorial, a Portland stone obelisk on an octagonal plinth, by F.A. Wright

and dating from 1920, now grade II listed. Daffodils round the memorial are the only formal planting in the village. A flagpole close to it looks sad when without a flag. Beyond is a brick bus shelter built after the War.

Whilst the Green itself is protected by notices and bollards, the gravel lane is under pressure from parked cars which are detrimental to its appearance and conflict with its use as a pedestrian thoroughfare and residents' access to their properties. Vehicles on the gravelled lane could be controlled by residents' permits. Car parking is already visually intrusive as much needed space is provided in lay-byes along the side of the Green. The wooden bollards are not always robust enough for their purpose, and cast iron ones might be considered.



*Fig. 22
Parking on the Green
outside Little Paddocks
and The Hoop*



*Fig. 23
There is a case for
cast iron bollards on
parts of the Green*

A pair of 18th/19th century timber houses (nos 13-15) stand at the beginning of the Green, next to the entrance to The Paddock, a late 20th century development of low density housing. Situated well to the back in the land behind the frontage, the access road presents a dull view of hard surfacing, fences and brick walls, and has damaged the appearance of the Green, which is replaced by tarmac with a large Keep clear sign written on it.



Fig. 24 The entrance to The Paddocks

From here to the Square, almost all the buildings are listed, and attributed to the 18th/19th century, but quite diverse in appearance if similar in scale and detailing. Apart from The Hoop, a popular public house which is weatherboarded, they are all of brick which has been painted, except for Keys (nos 23-25). Little Paddocks (no. 17) has shutters to the first floor windows, like nos 13-15, a feature that was quite common in Stock. Opposite this house on the Green is the village sign which would look more prominent on a longer post. The four evergreens planted round it look unhappy and superfluous. The Green here is intersected by gravelled access roads aligned on The Hoop and Compass Green (no. 27). The latter is set back from the frontage and has a long white painted brick boundary wall interrupted by railings in front of the house, making a strong horizontal statement. The garden to the side provides a verdant gap in the street scene. Consent has been given for a new house at the rear of the plot. The last of the listed buildings, Oak Cottage, is also set back on much the same building line, its garden fronted by attractive old green painted railings; it has been enlarged with a late Victorian bay under a gable on the left hand side.

To the west, a single storey building (no. 31A) in red brick with white brick pilasters originally had an open timber front, now infilled with reclaimed bricks. This must have been a stable to no. 31 Lynfield House, Victorian in appearance with canted bays, the brickwork painted in part, apparently a house of at least two phases. To the rear is Lynfield Mews, a new development of three houses, one with an improbable lucam, too far back to be conspicuous from the road. The gated entrance has a large area of bland block paving.

The Square

Where the Green originally opened out into a marketplace, it has been built up with an infill block, set within tarmac roads rather than gravel lanes. To find an infilled market with vestiges of row buildings as at Saffron Walden or Bury St Edmunds is unusual in a village, and the result is a tightly built up space with a special feel to it, detached from the busy thoroughfare of the High Street.

There is no square as such, more a T-shaped space which however separate it may feel, is accessible to traffic and lined with parked cars. Traffic management is limited to making the north-south road through the Square, opposite the Swan Lane junction, accessible only from the High Street. Further restrictions would lengthen residents' journeys and probably lead to more congestion. The one-way signage is very prominent but apparently regularly ignored. Most of the properties do not have parking spaces, and there is currently no restriction on parking. It is also of less architectural distinction than the High Street to the north. The buildings that contribute most to its character are Buttsbury Terrace, a late Victorian terrace in brick with good detailing, Nutshells, and the listed Farthings and The Bear. The Square is thus a problem space which has yet to fulfil its potential. Options for its enhancement commissioned by Chelmsford Borough Council proposed high quality paving and road surfacing throughout, and some soft landscaping and tree planting, but was not implemented. Without provision for off-street parking, it is difficult to see that this would have made much long term difference in the way the spaces are perceived.

At the approach to the Square, there is a semi-circular remnant of the Green, overgrown with brambles and trees, in need of maintenance. Beyond, this space is occupied by gardens, large trees, garages and outbuildings, associated with two houses which face the east side of The Square. Chestnuts originally faced the High Street, but has been adapted so it is accessed off The Square. It is joined to Nutshells, a 19th century house with a slate hipped roof, extended to the rear, its black shutters contrasting nicely with the white render. The outbuildings include what was part of a stable, since converted to business units. It has a nice roof of single Roman tiles, but the front is largely in white UPVC. An application to replace it with it with a cottage was approved in 2018.



*Fig. 25
The eastern entrance
to the Square, with the
small overgrown green*



Fig. 26 Nutshells and Chestnuts flanking the road through the Square

The southern infill block was being developed by the 18th century, as the 1777 map shows. The Dandelion and Burdock café, apparently an early one-and-a-half storey cottage, might be one of the oldest buildings. Stifford House, and the listed 1 Mill Street, located at the corners with the High Street, are older brick buildings in visually key positions. Opposite The Bear there is a modern house (no. 18) infilling what was previously a large gap, and the much restored Old Forge (no. 17) with brown painted windows.



Fig. 27 Looking west into The Square, Dandelion and Burdock on the left



Fig. 28 Looking east into The Square, the Bear on the right hand side

Farthings nicely closes the view from the road through from the High Street. Though Georgian in appearance, inside it is said to have moulded beams and must be part of a much older and rather altered building. Adjoining it is a 19th century single storey stable in the local brickwork, complementing Buttsbury Terrace to the north. Both Farthings and The Bear occupy large plots. The Bear's includes a 19th century brick and weatherboarded barn, which was in fact a large stable. It is now derelict, fenced off, and held up by a support scaffold. It is now in separate ownership to the public house. A large pond is a rare survivor of the many that once existed in the village. It is short of water in the summer and would benefit from conservation. The picket fence round it is now rather overgrown. The rest of the space behind the public house is an informal beer garden partially enclosed by hedges, and an extensive car park with a gravel surface, use of which seems not to be limited to patrons. The entrance to it off The Square is rather untidy. On Mill Road the car park is bounded by a 19th century single storey brick building which forms a rear extension to the public house, perhaps originally a brewhouse. Similar old brick buildings continue on the Mill Road frontage, small scale, irregular in shape and plan, roofs of differing heights, and a picturesque composition. An outbuilding, part weatherboard, adjoins a cottage set back from the road with a modern glazed porch in the angle against a long former stable with a roof of single Roman tiles, attached to Moat House (no. 15), which unusually is at right angles to the road.



*Fig. 29
Old brick buildings on Mill Road, an attractive composition of different roof shapes*

The north side of the infill block in The Square mainly comprises walls, fences, large trees, and outbuildings belonging to the properties on The Square, making for a frontage of rather mixed quality on the High Street where it narrows at the junction with Mill Road and Back Lane. The High Street side of the The Square has street lights of traditional design, but in The Square itself, there are two very ordinary ones which should be replaced with better ones.

High Street west

The southern part of the High Street is a contrast to the north, lacking the green spaces, narrower at least in the way it is perceived with more continuously built up frontages, and two busy road junctions. The west end of Mill Road is also tightly built up with old buildings. Containing the largest group of shops in the village, it closes the end of The Square and resembles it and the High Street in character.

At the corner with Swan Street, there is an old cast iron finger post made by the Maldon Ironworks. On the west side of Swan Street, a footpath leads to the Primary School. Galvanised guard rails on the road here could be replaced with better railings. The path passes a small brick building, now rather hidden by shrubs, which was a telephone exchange, then a library, and is now the Heritage Centre. The land in front of it at this corner was a car park, a rather bleak open space serving the former Cock Inn, the parking now relocated behind the inn which is renamed The Harvard. It is now the site of a large L-shaped tenement of three houses, white rendered, in the Design Guide vernacular with big gables. This is a successful development, creating a landmark in views up and down the High Street. Also a landmark is The Harvard, formerly The Cock, a 16th century or earlier building later encased in brick, presenting a long frontage at the angular junction of Back Lane and the High Street, and hence very conspicuous from many angles. It has been carefully restored, the brickwork cleaned and repointed in lime mortar. The rear wings are rendered and weatherboarded. Its car park has been well landscaped, its entrance defined by granite setts and the surface of gravel. A new weatherboarded stable-like building at the back provides extra accommodation.



*Fig. 30
New development at
the angle of Back
Lane and the High
Street. The finger
post is the only
directional sign in the
village. Note the
traditional lamp
standard, and the
post supporting a
very large number of
wires in this focal
position*



Fig. 31 The High Street junction with Mill Road and Back Lane, looking towards 1 Mill Street at the north-west corner of the Square. This house, and the Harvard on the left, are major landmarks at this junction

Opposite the Harvard is a cluster of listed 18th/19th century buildings at the Mill Road corner: a row of cottages, 4-6 Mill Road, part brick and part render; and the rather grander 2 Mill Road, all brick, three window bay, with a modillion cornice and canted bays at the ground floor. The Village Shop (no. 8) turns the corner into Mill Road, its entrance separating two large shop windows, to one side of which is a carriage entrance with boarded doors. There follow more cottages (nos 8A-16), all listed and to the same pattern, one window bay. The three ground floor bay windows were probably originally shop windows. That at 8A has stormproof casements. Some of these cottages may be much older than the 18th/19th century date implied by their listing. No. 12 seems to have late medieval timbers. There follows a taller block (nos 18-20, not listed), with rough cast render at the first floor and two shops at the ground floor. A third shop occupies a sympathetically designed late 20th century infill block which includes a carriage arch which gives access to a new house slipped into the backlands. The Mill Road shop fronts are all to a traditional design, with timber surrounds and fascias and stall risers. Pottery House (no. 24) is a white rendered listed building with large gables which looks as if it might be older than the estimated 18th/19th century.

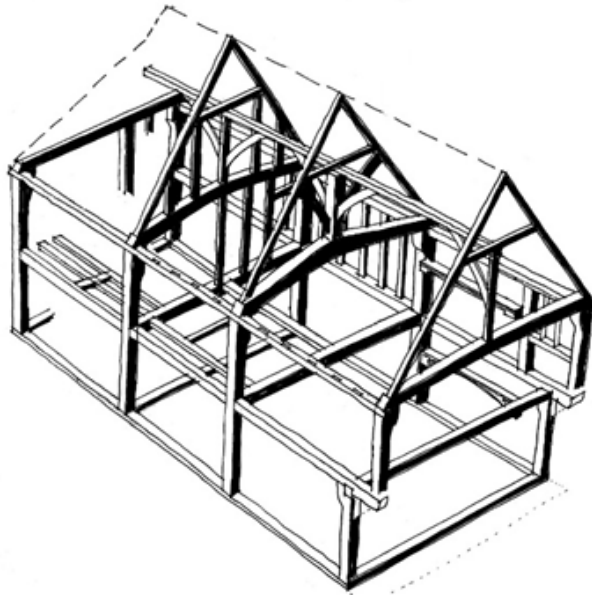


*Fig. 32
Shops and
cottages at the
west end of Mill
Lane*

On the corner of the High Street with Back Lane, there is an attractive Arts and Crafts building (no. 38), render above brick, with false timber framing in the gables, which includes a shop front and a carriage arch. Beyond are more listed brick buildings on the north side. No. 40 is a typical three window bay house, nos 44-46 a terrace of two, one extended, the ground floor openings in semi-circular recesses, the narrow front garden enclosed by a white picket fence. No. 48 is rather different, brick with a parapet roof, apparently enclosing a 17th century building. The wall round its garden displays a feature that is repeated to the west down the High Street, the base of it having been rendered in cement. Although an attempt to remedy the poor condition of the brickwork, it has left the boundary walls disfigured on this approach to the Conservation Area. Tudor cottage (no. 52) is at right angles to the street with a narrow frontage, explicable as its brickwork encloses the high end cross-wing of a 16th century or earlier house. Its massive chimney is very much a landmark. Drivers (no. 54) is also listed, its ashlar render apparently concealing a timber frame, its frontage neatly enclosed with railings. To the rear it has some fine exceptionally tall chimneys.



*Fig. 33
High Street,
looking west,
rendered brick
cottages at nos
39-45,
weatherboarded
pair no. 51, and
the Free Church*



*Fig. 34
The timber-framed wing in Tudor Cottage,
no. 52, High Street (D. Stenning)*

On the south side of the High Street, a terrace of 18th/19th century brick cottages, their façade rendered, is succeeded by a modern semi-detached pair which succeed in not being symmetrical, set back from the street behind block paving driveways, and then a listed pair of 19th century cottages (no. 51), recently restored as one house with weatherboarding reinstated, a new cottage barely visible slipped in behind them. The Free Church, formerly Congregational, built in 1889, is a simple rectangular building in the Italianate style by C. Pertwee. It is red brick with white brick detailing and cast iron windows. A hall has been built up against it on the right hand side on the site of the former manse, set back behind a parking space with block paving. The frontage to the church has recently been paved with concrete slabs almost white in colour which look very discordant. The frontages in this part of the High Street are fairly continuous, but where interrupted by gardens and driveways to garages, they are at risk of unsatisfactory detailing.

Further west, the listed White House looks Georgian, with sash windows and canted bays at the ground floor, but a cluster of three diagonal chimney stacks betrays an earlier, possibly 17th century origin. Rectory Hall is a late 19th century parish hall, red brick with cast iron windows, and a flat roofed extension to the rear. Its attractive frontage is scarred by a band of cement render which continues on the boundary of the Old Rectory to the west. The Hall is unused and looks neglected.



*Fig. 35
Rectory Hall. The use of
cement render has
disfigured the building and
the boundary wall, and
exacerbated the damp
problem it was meant to
cure*

Mill Road East

This part of the road lacks the close grain to the west, the buildings more widely spaced out once more in a green setting, many of them modern and located in backland developments concealed from the frontage.

Next to Pottery House is access to Bakers Field, a no through road leading to a BT telephone exchange, a large single storey modern building which is likely to offer the potential for redevelopment. Beyond it are two new houses. On Mill Road, there are a pair of old cottages behind a picket fence, one with UPVC windows. Much of the land here belonged to Hope Farm, a plain Georgian house with rendered walls, a hipped roof and a modern extension to the rear. It stands on a large plot behind an old brick boundary wall, a gravel drive leading to an imposing porch on Doric columns. Behind it are more modern houses. On the north side of the road, a long wide strip of greensward with two large weeping willows occupies the site of the Ware Pond, and explains why two early 20th century detached houses are so far set back from the carriageway, neither of them very evident behind trees and hedges.

At the edge of the Conservation Area, behind a sweeping tarmac drive and a magnificent oak, is the church of Our Lady and St. Joseph. This was built in 1891 as a school to a design by P.P. Pugin. Since 1937 it has been the Roman Catholic church, a role which has required some alteration to the building. Of brick with a slate roof, it still looks like a school on the south side where it has characteristically large windows. Here there is field of mown grass, and then a cemetery enclosed by fences, a very tranquil setting. A footpath down the edge of the church property turns west across undulating open countryside to the graveyard of All Saints, an oecumenical link between the two denominations.



*Fig. 36
Mill Road, church of
Our Lady and St
Joseph*

Back Lane

Back Lane is primarily an area of modern housing with two notable large developments on its north side. This is somewhat unexpected, as its approach is tunnel-like, between two old brick walls so close together that two cars cannot pass and traffic is prioritised. It then opens out into a streetscape of much diversity, with houses of different types with a variable relationship to the road, and some prominent tall trees. As well as the road to

Buttsbury and the A12 at Ingatestone, it was the back lane to the High Street, which seems to explain Stock Lodge Cottages (nos 27-29), an interesting composition of brick buildings in origin ancillary to Stock Lodge, and more old cottages at nos 21-25. No. 25, The Coach House, has black weatherboarding and green painted Crittall windows. Apart from a row of 19th century white painted cottages with UPVC windows (nos 20-26), the north side of Back Lane is all modern. No. 18 is a modern brick house now clad with black weatherboarding so that it looks like a barn, with three large gabled dormer windows on one side of its roof.



*Fig. 37
Back Lane, Stock
Lodge Cottages*

*Fig. 38
The green in Back
Lane and Vernon
Corner*

Vernon Corner, two blocks of flats dating from 1986 at the west edge of the Conservation Area, stands in a green setting, behind a long rectangle of grass with a row of huge poplar trees. The greensward forms an informal square, a tranquil space, albeit one accessible to traffic with parked cars. The surface of the tarmac road and pavements round the square is much patched, and some of the concrete bollards are broken. The flats are built of a deep red brick with matching pigmented mortar. The elevations to Back Lane are well broken up with gables. The windows, all UPVC, have projecting cills with modillion courses beneath them. The entrances to the flats are on the other side of the buildings, an enclosed area with shared amenity and parking.



Cambridge Close opens off the entrance to Back Lane, turning left and right (Austen Drive) into a c.1990 housing development by Countryside, a successful Design Guide scheme. The roads are narrow and winding, and the houses close to them, giving a good sense of enclosure. Materials and house design exhibit considerable variety, a mixture of one-and a-half and two storey. Most houses have gravel drives and shrubs or hedges in front of them. There are many small trees: it is very green.

It was built 1896 to a design by George Sherrin, with an extension of c.1980. Opposite, on the north side largely behind trees, are the National School built 1839, enlarged 1890, and made redundant in 1975 by the school in Swan Lane. To one side is the later schoolmaster's house. The school, red brick detailing, now looks rather neglected and its surroundings overgrown. Set back on a small green the listed Twedy almshouses nestle behind high and slightly untidy hedges. They were endowed under the will of Richard Twedy who died in 1574, making provision for 'four poor knights', as his brass in the church declares. They comprise four cottages of two rooms, one heated. They are little altered apart from facilities provided to the rear. They are interesting and important both as early almshouses and as the oldest known example of the products of the Stock brick industry. School Lane winds uphill past a pair of isolated mid 20th century semi-detached houses eventually to join Back Lane outside the Conservation Area.

Further up the hill on the south side there is a wider green forming the setting for Bellmans Farm and the church, its timber tower and shingled spire rising above the surrounding trees. The greensward is ringed with wooden bollards to prevent car parking. There is however a generous gravelled car park for the church, recently enclosed with bollards to limit the size of vehicle that can use it. An old lamp standard on the green has been fitted with an ugly and incongruous modern lamp. Bellmans is a well restored listed H-plan house of the 16th Century or earlier, its garden its garden enclosed by a white picket fence.

In 1940, a land mine fell in the churchyard, blowing the roof off the church and damaging surrounding buildings. The barns in the farmyard at Bellmans have all been rebuilt to their traditional appearance but with a lower roof line and converted to other uses. The church was restored after the war. A re-ordering by the well known



Fig. 41 The old school building



Fig. 42 The Twedy almshouses at Church Green



Fig. 43 Bellmans, a 16th century H-plan house

Cambridge Close initially leads to an attractive terrace of one-and-a-half storey cottages. To the left, outside the Conservation Area, beyond a pair of square brick 'gatehouses', the scale rises to two storey detached. To the right, Austen Drive ends in a parking court which is enhanced by an old cartlodge which originally belonged to the Cock Inn. Here there is a pond, recently restored but much reduced from its original size, and views of The Harvard. A footpath from Cambridge Close gives access to the Primary School which results in it becoming a car park at school opening and closing hours.



Fig. 39 Cambridge Close and Austen Drive

Church Green

The western end of the Conservation Area has a rural setting at the edge of the Stock Brook valley, with detached buildings situated round two small greens either side of the road, which is otherwise lined with tall trees and hedges. The focal point here is All Saints church, its tower an iconic landmark at the brow of the hill.

The entrance to the Conservation Area is half way down the hill, marked by a 30mph and village sign, and white painted fencing parallel to the road. This would look better if the signage were integrated with gates at right angles to the road. Down a long drive there is a glimpse of Bishop's House, the residence of the Roman Catholic bishop of Brentwood, formerly the presbytery.



Fig. 40 Approach to the southern entrance to the Conservation Area

church architect Laurence King was completed in 1981. It is in very good condition, and it and its churchyard are well maintained. The rubble built nave dates from the 12th or 13th century, the north aisle from the 15th, and the chancel from a rebuilding in the 1848 restoration. Foundations discovered in the 20th century restoration have led to the suggestion there was an earlier church on the site. The tower is one of nine timber belltowers in Essex. On the north side of the church, there is very successful extension by Laurence King dating from 1989, a model of how to build on to a church.



*Fig. 44
View looking
across Church
Green to All
Saints, a landmark
on the approach
to the village*

To the south of the church is the graveyard, its focal point an octagonal garden of rest with a central cross, paved partially with headstones cleared from the graveyard. This was constructed in 1953 on the site of the land mine to commemorate where it fell. The graveyard was extended to the east in 1904 where it is shaded by tall trees, between which are long views downhill and over wooded countryside. The path through it continues as a public footpath across the hilly valley side and links to that beside the Catholic church in Mill Road.



*Fig. 45
All Saints church
and the garden of
rest*

On the north side of the church, there is an extensive green, a parkland setting, though a number of trees have been felled here recently. The church itself is screened on this side by a row of maples. A path leads north to a gate on the road. There is no evident boundary between this glebe space and the houses of Rectory Close, which comprise the Old Rectory (no.1), its former coach house (no. 3), now residential and recently extended, and two modern houses in secluded positions to the south. The Old Rectory is a large building with two prominent gables, brick with white brick detailing, by H.E. Kendall junior, c.1841, altered 1900-08 by Chancellor. It is largely screened by trees on the road frontage except for an older part with false timber framing.

Over the road from the church there is a 20th century wooden stable with a single Roman tile roof, disused and boarded up, destined for redevelopment. Along from it is Church Green Cottage, a listed one-and-a-half storey house with a central chimney stack, with a large two storey extension to parkland which have now been developed for three secluded modern houses grouped round Highwoods Close, which is accessed off Back Lane outside the Conservation Area. Many of the fine trees here have been lost. The old brick boundary wall to Stock Lodge flanks the road, in part with trellis work above

it behind which can be glimpsed one of the new houses. Much of this wall has been disfigured by a band of cement render applied to the bottom of it, or even to its full height. This is a blot on the entrance to the village. In front of Stock Lodge itself, however, there are some fine old cast iron railings. The house itself is now divided into four. A new extension to no. 3, cleverly hidden behind a curving garden wall, has a flat roof with a rather unexpected deep fascia conspicuous from the road. A modern house (no. 60) with UPVC windows and front door, which shares the drive with Stock Lodge, looks rather out of context. Further along the road, Rose Cottage is a foretaste of the brick houses to be found in the village, 19th century with a hipped roof and two full height canted bays. It stands behind a deep front garden, with a gravelled drive, and a boundary wall with the typical band of cement. From about this point, the road which has had a rural or parkland setting, becomes more closely built up.



Fig. 46 The Old Rectory



Fig. 47 Stock Lodge. Note the cement rendered boundary wall, the fine old cast iron railings, and the fascia of the extension

Contribution to Character

The character of the Conservation Area is the sum of individual buildings of which it is composed and the spaces between them. This can be shown on a map, as has been done in Fig. 48, where buildings are categorised as:

1. positive, by reason of their architectural quality, historic interest, general conformity with the overall character of the Conservation Area, condition and presentation
2. neutral, less architecturally distinctive and typical of the Conservation Area, but fitting satisfactorily into it
3. negative, buildings which have an adverse effect on the character of the Conservation Area, either because of their poor condition, or because of unsatisfactory detailing, design and alterations.

Fig. 48 Map showing contribution to character

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

This appraisal has shown the Stock Conservation Area to be in good condition, with very few buildings that detract from its quality and appearance. It is an attractive village, instantly recognisable as a special place with old brick and weatherboarded buildings, narrow streets, green spaces, enhanced by high standards of maintenance. Such problems as there are arise mainly from traffic and car parking, and the effect these have on the public realm, and pressure for development of any available open space and the extension of buildings. These and other issues are considered below.

Traffic and parking

Traffic flow through the village is relentless. This, of course, is a universal problem which awaits solutions requiring major behavioural and cultural change. The main road through the village is also potentially dangerous, narrow with a confusing junction with Mill Road and Back Lane, and a blind summit on the hill by the church. It should be possible to manage this situation by introducing a 20mph speed limit, with some form of traffic calming such as rumble strips at the entrances to the Conservation Area. The coloured tarmac used throughout the High Street goes some way to alerting drivers they are entering the village and should be retained in future maintenance schemes.

There are no parking restrictions in the Conservation Area. Cars intrude into the gravel lanes on the Green, where access and parking should be restricted by permits to residents only. Parking bays extend down the south side of the High Street from just west of Common Road almost as far as the war memorial. Parked cars line the road sides in The Square. There is little that can be done about this as many if not most properties do not have off-street parking. The only publicly accessible car park at the Village Hall is at

the extreme end of the village, and does not allow over-night parking. It would be helpful this car park were better advertised. It is difficult to see where further car parking space could be provided, except perhaps at the telephone exchange off Mill Road if this site were developed.

Development pressure

Old photographs show that there has been little change in the centre of Stock over the last 100 years or more. Most of the recent change in the Conservation Area has been in the form of new houses inserted into backlands and gardens, and as such only glimpsed or completely invisible from the highway. Stock is a very popular village, at risk of being a victim of its success. Only the area around Greenwoods in the east, and the south side of Church Green at the western end, lie outside the Defined Settlement Area. It is predictable that the few remaining large plots are likely to come under pressure for development. Building executive style houses around closes on constrained infill plots tends not to make for good place-making or conform to the character of the Conservation Area. It risks bringing the suburban character of the outer part of the village into the historic core and prejudicing its setting. 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.

There is too much pressure to extend existing buildings. Many have already been extended to the limit of what is proportionate and possible within the constraints of good design. Alterations and extensions, as well as any new build, should be carried out to a high standard of design, as required by Chelmsford City Council's 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 comprehensively in the Village Design Statement.

Fig. 49 Map showing proposals for the management of the Conservation Area

The public realm

Inasmuch as Stock is a very much a green village, with areas of greensward and roads and properties surrounded by trees and hedges, the public realm tends to be informal and low key. Bollards, for instance, are mostly timber. Benches are traditional, of several different styles. Pavements are tarmac, and usually patched, but mostly do not look out of place. The lanes on the Green are gravelled, as are most private drives. They are separated from the greensward by white painted metal posts and chains which look attractive so long as they are well maintained.

There are minor improvements that could be made. More robust bollards would be appropriate in some busy places under pressure from traffic and parking, for instance on the gravelled lane where they block access along it, or in the tighter parts of the parking bays on the High Street. The concrete bollards in Back Lane and The Square, and the black rubberised ones on the High Street Green, could be replaced with better looking ones in, say, cast iron.

There seems to be no planting on the Green apart from daffodils at the War Memorial. More extensive planting of bulbs could enhance the Green in spring yet remain informal and low maintenance. Two lamp posts in The Square could be replaced with ones of traditional design like those in the High Street. One at the Mill Road junction has a road

sign 'Chelmsford' badly fixed to it, and doing the motorist and residents no favours in encouraging traffic in this direction. An old lamp post on Church Green has an ugly modern replacement luminaire. The guard rails on Back Lane by the footpath to the school should be replaced with more suitable railings.

The small wedge shaped traffic island at the High Street/Mill Road junction is a miserable object at the central point of the village. There may be limited scope for doing anything here because of the need to ensure traffic flows safely and without distractions, but it could have improved surfacing and traffic signs. The directional bollards could be replaced with one more suitable for the Conservation Area. There could be a central feature, such as a good quality road sign, or a lamp post.

The green in Back Lane at Vernon Corner, and the road around it, are in poor condition. The road and pavements are very badly patched, kerbs are damaged, and some of the concrete bollards are broken. This falls below the standard of the rest of the Conservation Area. The two footpaths at the ends of the green could have a bound gravel surface rather than tarmac, as could the path round its perimeter.

The Square

The Square has been identified as a problem area, choked with parked cars and accessible to through traffic. Whilst it may be difficult to do anything about this, improvements to the public realm could change the way it is perceived which in turn could affect the way it is used. The enhancement schemes previously commissioned by Chelmsford Borough Council would have had this effect. Elements of these schemes could be implemented piecemeal on a reduced scale, and thus might be more achievable. These could include:

- Improved landscaping of the semi-circular green at the entrance at the east end of The Square, urgently in need of attention in this prominent position because of invasive undergrowth. Timber or cast iron bollards might be more appropriate here rather than the existing white metal posts and chains. There is the opportunity here for a feature of focal interest.
- Replacement lamp posts as already mentioned above.
Bands of granite setts at all the entrances and junctions would give people a sense that they are entering a special space.
- The limited areas of tarmac footpath, round Nutshells and Dandelion and Burdock, could be surfaced with bound gravel.

Of the paving options proposed by the enhancement schemes, tegula blocks at the road edges for a shared parking/footpath use seems most preferable and possibly realisable notionally prioritising the roadside as a pedestrian area.

Boundaries and driveways

Boundary treatments in the Conservation Area are mostly good, typically hedges, picket fences and walls. The walls at the western approach to the village are badly scarred with cement render and look ugly. Unfortunately there is little that can be done about this apart from rebuilding as the underlying brickwork will be badly damaged, though covering the render with a stone coloured paint might effect an improvement. Wooden fences other

than pickets are not common. Larchlap fencing with concrete posts behind Chestnuts on the north side of The Square, and the great length of dull close boarded fencing at Greenwoods, are not of the quality expected in a conservation area; that both are disappearing behind spontaneous untidy hedges is not necessarily a recommendation. The crenellated fence at Bishops House illustrates one way of making close boarded fencing more acceptable. There are some nice old railings at Stock Lodge and Oak Cottage. Modern railings are not always successful, often too thin, and when with painted arrow-head tops, fussy and frilly. If railings are open to areas of hard standing not softened by planting, they can also look utilitarian and functional.

Driveways and accesses to garages can represent unsatisfactory interruptions in the streetscape. There is a tendency to use block paving in such situations. Unrelieved large areas of it look bland and characterless. More suited to the conservation area is a band of granite setts retaining a gravelled surface, or bound gravel. Garages have rarely been designed to complement the houses they belong to, which is unfortunate where they close the view at the end of driveways.

The Conservation Area boundary

The boundary is fairly tightly drawn around the historic core of the village, containing the High Street, The Square, and short lengths of the roads leading off. The exceptions are the western and eastern ends where it includes open space and thereby protects the rural edge of the settlement. There seems no case for reducing the extent of the Conservation Area, nor is the development around it of such quality to warrant inclusion. However, a small extension in the area of School Lane and Back Lane could be suggested. Where it leaves the Conservation Area, School Lane skirts a pasture field bounded by an impressive hedgerow which contains some very fine oak trees, originally pollards. At the north end of this, Fosters Close is a successful development of nine affordable houses in the Design Guide vernacular. The development and the field are closely related, the field part of its setting as well as of the backs of buildings on the High Street, with a view over to All Saints church. The field forms part of the spacious setting and rural character of this part of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area boundary could be extended to enclose the field and its hedgerow.

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 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. There are for instance very few UPVC windows. For the moment, such extra controls do not seem necessary.

Buildings at risk

The Rectory Hall, and the barn at the Bear, are both good buildings which if restored and put into use would make a positive contribution to the appearance of the Conservation Area. The barn is curtilage listed by reason of its historic relationship to the public house. These buildings should be added to the register of Historic Buildings at Risk in Chelmsford City.

Listed buildings and local lists

As has been seen, the list descriptions for Stock, as for most of Chelmsford, are very old and inadequate. Ideally the listed buildings in the parish should be resurveyed. Historic England is unlikely to find the resources to do that, but does encourage local authorities to draw up local lists of buildings and heritage assets which will reinforce local character and distinctiveness, and strengthen the role of the historic environment in the planning process. This is in line with the NPPF which extends protection to undesignated heritage assets. Chelmsford's local list has yet to include Stock. Local lists can be compiled through the volunteer led local initiatives in collaboration with the local authority. Heritage assets that might be considered for a local list include the following:

- The former school and schoolmaster's house
- Stock Lodge
- The Old Rectory
- Bishops House
- Rectory Hall
- The Free Church
- Little Court
- 58 High Street (M Estate Agents)
- The Catholic church of Our lady and St. Joseph
- 6 Swan Lane
- The gardens at Greenwoods
- The Bakers Arms
- The finger post at the Swan Lane/High Street junction
- The pump at Church Green

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