

# Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Client:  
Tendring District Council

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Summary

As defined by the 'Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, a Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Conservation area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides a basis for planning policies with an objective to conserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

The Thorpe Station and Maltings Conservation Area was designated, by Tendring District Council, on 26th March 1990. It is located roughly 1 kilometre (0.6 miles) south of Thorpe-le-Soken on the B1414. The railway line which serves Clacton on Sea, Frinton and Walton from Colchester runs through the site and crosses the road on a modern bridge, to the east of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area contains the late nineteenth century maltings buildings, the station building, nineteenth century cottages on Edward Road, the former King Edward VII Public House, along with some modern or less significant buildings.

The Thorpe Station and Maltings Conservation Area is on the Historic England At Risk register and its condition is considered to be 'very bad', its vulnerability is 'high' and the trend is towards 'deteriorating significantly'.

Tendring District Council has appointed Place Services to prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal. The document is

provided as baseline information for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development within the Conservation Area or its setting.

## 1.2 Conserving Tendring's Heritage

This report provides an assessment of the historic development and character of Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings and outline its special interest. The appraisal will also consider the significance of heritage assets and the contribution that these, along with their setting, make to the character of the area. The understanding of significance will be used to assess the susceptibility of the Conservation Area to new development, highlighting key assets of importance.

The Appraisal will consider how Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings came to be developed, the building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities can be used to assess its key characteristics, highlighting potential impact future development may have.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights good design as one of twelve core principals of sustainable development. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context, the immediate and larger character of the area in which new development is sited.

This assessment follows best practice guidance, including Historic England's revised *Historic England Advice Note 1 for Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management* (2018) and *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017).

## 1.3 Purpose of Appraisal

This document should be used as a baseline to inform future development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the Historic Environment and its unique character. It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the legislation, policy and best practice guidance given in the appendix. Applications that demonstrate a genuine understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce good design and good outcomes for agents and their clients. This Appraisal will strengthen understanding of Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings and its development, informing future design.

## 1.4 Planning Policy Context

The legislative framework for conservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990). In particular Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas, and Section 72 requires that



special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced. Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposal for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in Chapter 16 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2021).

Tendring District's Local Plan was adopted in 2007 and it is used in determining planning applications, where relevant. As a new Local Plan evolves it will begin to have more weight in the planning process in deciding planning applications and guiding new development across the Tendring District. Once fully adopted a new Local Plan will guide future development in the Tendring area. It will be critical for creating new job opportunities, attracting investment in new and improved infrastructure, protecting the environment and ensuring that new homes are built in the right locations and achieve the right standards of quality and design.

The Tendring District has more than 960 Listed Buildings. The District also benefits from 27 Scheduled Monuments which include above and below ground features, 3 Historic Parks and Gardens and 9 Protected Lanes, preserved for their historic indication of ancient road patterns in the District. The District also contains 20 Conservation Areas. There are 21 designated heritage assets on the Historic England At Risk register in Tendring, including the Thorpe-le-

Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area. The new Local Plan's strategic objective for Cultural Heritage is "To conserve and enhance Tendring District's heritage, respecting historic buildings and their settings, links and views."

Protection of the District's heritage assets is crucial to its cultural identity. Heritage assets can improve the local communities quality of life and can help to sustain economic growth and new investment for both residents and businesses. The Council is seeking to reduce the number of heritage assets included in the Heritage at Risk Register and will consider designating additional heritage assets which are of local importance.<sup>1</sup> The Council will also seek to manage change within the Historic Environment by requiring proposals to respond appropriately to the significance of any affected heritage assets and by identifying where interventions within the Historic Environment would be beneficial to it; and by working with partners to secure sources of funding to aid delivery of enhancements to heritage assets. This would be in line with Tendring District Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 for the promotion of Tendring's tourism, cultural and heritage assets.

The Draft Publication of the new Tendring District Local Plan has a number of objectives, including Objective 7 which relate to the historic environment. The Draft Local Plan document states the following:

<sup>1</sup> Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond, Publication Draft June 2017

#### **Objective 7**

*To conserve and enhance Tendring District's historic environment, including: heritage; respecting historic buildings and their settings; heritage assets; landscapes; links; and views.*

To achieve this objective, various policies are proposed in the Draft Local Plan, including the following, which relate to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.

#### **Policy PPL 8 CONSERVATION AREAS**

*New development within a designated Conservation Area, or which affects its setting, will only be permitted where it has regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character and appearance of the area, especially in terms of:*

- a. scale and design, particularly in relation to neighbouring buildings and spaces;*
- b. materials and finishes, including boundary treatments appropriate to the context;*
- c. hard and soft landscaping;*
- d. the importance of spaces to character and appearance; and*
- e. any important views into, out of, or within the Conservation Area.*



*Proposals for new development involving demolition within a designated Conservation Area must demonstrate why they would be acceptable, particularly in terms of the preservation and enhancement of any significance and impact upon the Conservation Area.*

***This Policy contributes towards achieving Objective 7 of this Local Plan.***

#### **Policy PPL 9 LISTED BUILDINGS**

*Proposals for new development affecting a listed building or its setting will only be permitted where they will protect its special architectural or historic interest, its character, appearance, fabric and:*

- a. are explained and justified through an informed assessment and understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting; and*
- b. are of a scale, design and use materials and finishes that respect the listed building and its setting.*

***This Policy contributes towards achieving Objective 7 of this Local Plan.***

Tourism is an important source of income in the District, estimated to be worth more than £276 million. The Council identifies the development of tourism as a core objective (Objective 10), with the intention of building on the strength of the District and its history and heritage.<sup>2</sup> The District's built heritage is therefore an important and valuable asset that is unique to Tendring. However, this asset is fragile and finite. The enhancement, protection and conservation of Tendring's built heritage has the potential to return great social and economic benefits to the local community and enhance the environment within which the people of Tendring live and work.

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<sup>2</sup> Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond, Publication Draft June 2017

### **1.5 Boundary review**

The boundary of the Conservation Area includes the buildings and spaces associated with the maltings and station and their late-Victorian setting. A review of the Conservation Area and public consultation was carried out by Tendring District Council in 2005-2006 and an Appraisal document was produced in March 2006. Within the Appraisal there was a proposal to reduce the boundary of the Conservation Area in the south to exclude the semi-detached cottages on Edward Road.

The opinion expressed in the 2006 appraisal was that Edward Road was visually divided from the rest of the area by the railway and that the setting around Edward Road was unattractive and compromised by the industrial estate to the east on Harwich Road. The appraisal stated that the appearance of the houses had been too heavily altered for the application of an Article 4 Direction, which may return some visual integrity to the houses, to be worthwhile. The 2006 proposed boundary reduction was not supported by the Parish Council at the time and was subsequently not adopted.

The houses on Edward Road are likely to have a direct historic association with the Conservation Area as they were built as railway and workers' cottages. They may have provided accommodation for workers at the maltings or the brick manufacturing kilns which were once located to the south of the Conservation Area. They may also have provided accommodation for agricultural workers and it is this evidence for a combination of industrial manufacturing within a rural setting that embodies the character and special interest of the Conservation Area.

Roughly half of the Edward Road cottages have been rendered and painted, whilst the remaining buildings retain their exposed brick exteriors. Many of the original timber windows have been replaced with modern glazing, though some remain. Despite these alterations a substantial amount of the original, late nineteenth to early twentieth century character remains, to an extent that they contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, furthermore their physical and historic relationship to the maltings can

still be perceived. Therefore, due to the historic and architectural special interest of its buildings and layout, Edward Road has been retained within the Conservation Area boundary.

However the small area to the south of Edward Road has been excluded from the Conservation Area. This area is mainly covered with undergrowth, while some parts are used as parking spaces for the road's residents. This scrub area lacks the historic interest, shared by the rest of the Conservation Area and therefore has been excluded. The exclusion represents a minor adjustment to the Conservation Area boundary and has resulted in the area becoming part of the Conservation Area's setting. All designated heritage assets, including conservation areas have a setting, which the NPPF defines as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. The setting of a heritage asset can make an important contribution to its significance and how that significance can be appreciated. The protected area, along with the wider setting of the Conservation Area is therefore a consideration when change is planned and how this may affect the significance of the Conservation Area. No other changes to the boundary of the Conservation Area are suggested.

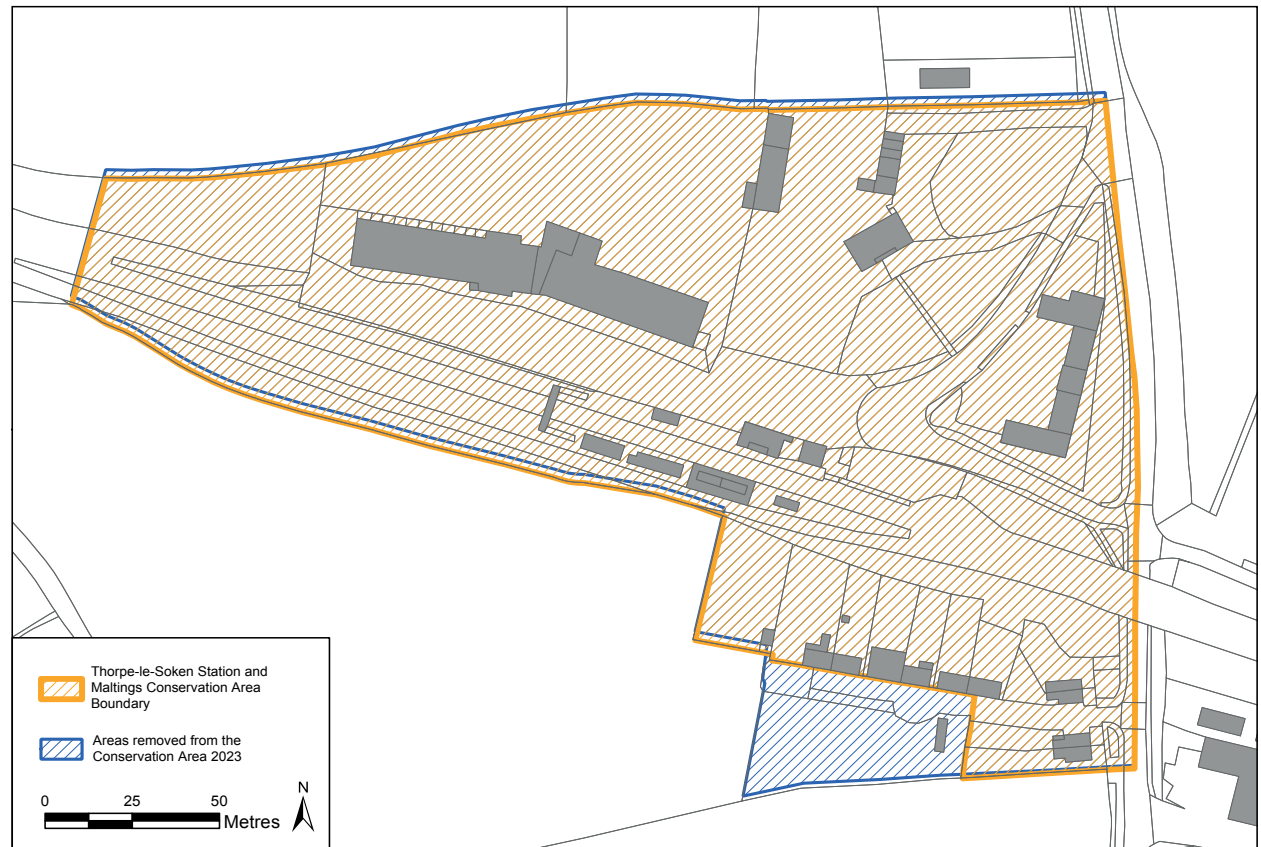


Figure 1 Map showing boundary revisions

## 2.0 Conservation Area

### 2.1 Location and Topography

The bedrock at Thorpe-le-Soken is clay, silt and sand of the Thames riverine deposit group. This sedimentary bedrock was formed approximately 34 to 56 million years ago in the Palaeogene Period. The sediments are marine in origin and comprise coarse to fine-grained slurries and debris that would have flowed from a river estuary into a deep-sea environment, forming graded beds.<sup>3</sup>

The Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings are located adjacent and to the north of the stream of Holland Brook,<sup>4</sup> where the land slopes gently down to the marsh at the water's edge. Here, the geology differs as a much later deposit of a band of river clay and silt, formed up to two million years ago in the Quaternary Period reflecting the channels, floodplains and levees of a river or estuary.

The area in which the Conservation Area is situated comprises an open agricultural landscape, with historic settlement in the area at the village of Thorpe-le-Soken and the rather smaller settlement around the church/hall complex at Kirby-le-Soken. Surrounding these centres are a number of isolated halls, farms and cottages, with a mixture of rectilinear fields of ancient origin and some later enclosure. The modern landscape retains much of this historic pattern, although both Thorpe and Kirby-le-Soken have expanded considerably in size. The historic cores of Thorpe and Kirby-le-Soken are designated as Conservation Areas and the early twentieth century garden at Thorpe Hall is a Registered Park and Garden.<sup>5</sup> The Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area is situated on the southern edge of the Parish of Thorpe-Le-Soken, which according to the 2011 census had an estimated population of 2034.<sup>6</sup>

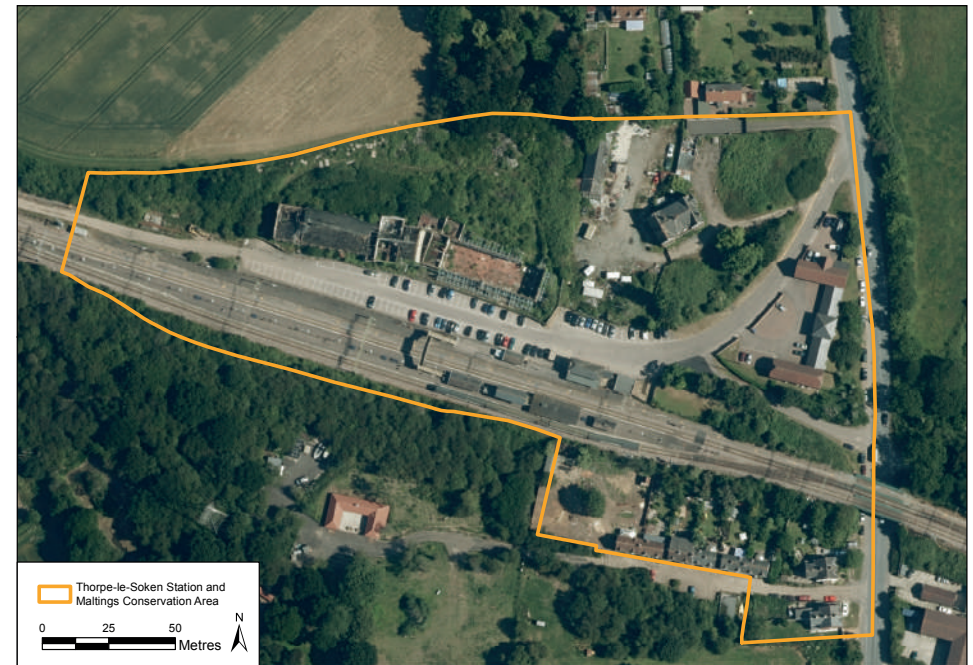


Figure 2 Thorpe Le Soken Station and Maltings within its wider setting

3 British Geological Survey <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk>. Accessed 10/10/19

4 Essex Rivers Hub <http://essexrivershub.org>. Accessed 10/10/19

5 Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project 2008

6 <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/eastofengland/admin/> Acces





## 2.2 Historical Overview

The following section provides an overview of the history of Thorpe-Le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area and its environs. The settlement of Thorpe-le-Soken, to the north of the Conservation Area, is medieval in origin and expanded during the post-medieval period, however, Thorpe Maltings and Station date to the nineteenth century and the origins of the Conservation Area here lie in the arrival of the railway line in 1867.

### **Prehistory: Palaeolithic to Iron Age (c.10,000 BC to 100 BC)**

Thorpe-le-Soken's location, on high ground and relatively close to the coast, provided an ideal place for occupation with easy access to the intertidal zone for early settlers. Evidence for activity on the site of Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings was identified during archaeological work undertaken in 2017 which revealed a Mesolithic/early Neolithic flint artefact. Further examples of Mesolithic activity have been located to the south of the area at Redbridge cottage; these comprise a large assemblage of flint tools.

There are indicators of later prehistoric occupation within the vicinity of the Conservation Area in the form of cropmark evidence recorded from aerial photography. Features including probable Bronze Age ring and penannular ditches and trackways have been identified both to the north and south of the area.

There is limited evidence for Iron Age activity in or around the Conservation Area.

### **Roman**

Roman activity has been identified to the northeast of the Conservation Area at Thorpe Hall where excavation identified ditches, gullies and pits.

### **Saxon and Medieval**

In the Saxon period, Thorpe-le-Soken formed part of 'The Sokens' which was later split into Kirby and Thorpe-le-Soken, and Walton-on-the-Naze. The suffix 'le-Soken' has Danish origins indicating some early occupation. The Domesday Book (1086) records 'The Sokens' as Aelduluesnasa which was owned by the Canon of St Paul's Cathedral before and after 1066.<sup>7</sup> Thorpe-le-Soken did not become a separate manor until 1222. The manor house survived until the mid-sixteenth century though much of it was demolished during the alterations to the Hall undertaken by J.M. Leake in 1822.

In the medieval period the area along the Holland Brook, including the land now within the Conservation Area, was located within the Gunfleet Estuary. Whilst no evidence of activity from this period has been discovered within the boundary of the Conservation Area, the tidal estuary, extending inland from Frinton and Clacton possibly as far as Weeley, may have permitted small boats to venture upstream along Holland Brook as far as the Conservation Area. The medieval settlement of Thorpe-le-Soken, to the north, was largely centred along the High Street and is evident today in the historic building stock.

### **Post Medieval**

The land now within the Conservation Area is depicted as open arable land to the north of Holland Brook on the 1777 Chapman & Andre map of Essex. Holland Brook can be seen running west to east, along with the road to the village of Thorpe (le-Soken) from the south. Thorpe Hall and Thorpe Park (farmhouse) are shown, which were significant agricultural estates and farms at the time, both of which endure today. The village of Thorpe-le-Soken, to the north, grew as a linear settlement along the High Street with Thorpe

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<sup>7</sup> Rumble, A., 1983, Domesday Book: Essex, Phillimore, Chichester

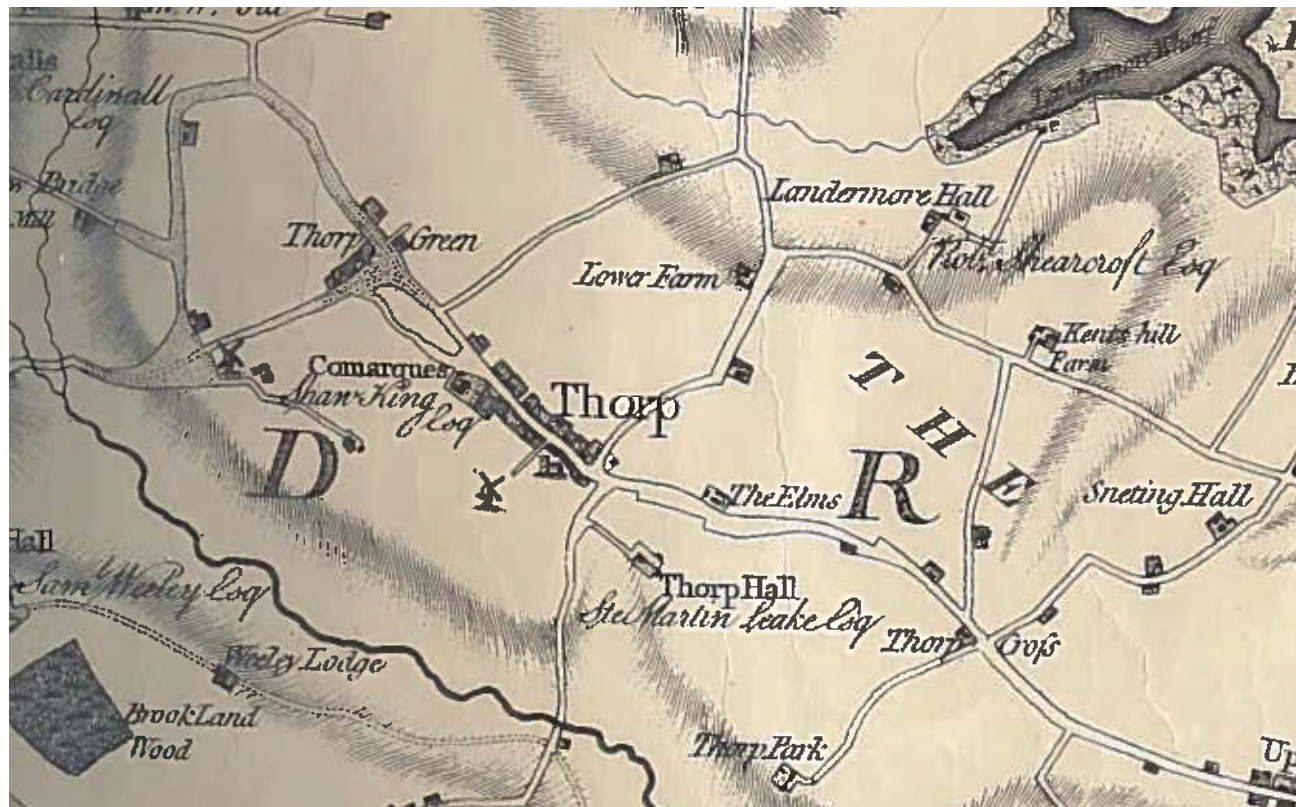


Figure 3 A detail from the Chapman & Andre Map of Essex, 1777

Green to the north-west. The site of the maltings remained in use as arable agricultural land until the land was bought in 1867 to facilitate the construction of the railway.

The origins of the Conservation Area derive from the arrival of the Walton to Colchester branch line in 1866 and the construction of what was then called Thorpe Station, which introduced fast transportation and communication links between London and the Essex coast. The station was opened by the Tendring Hundred Railway (THR), a subsidiary of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) and the line finally ran all the way from Colchester to Walton-on-Naze in 1867. However, a rival project to build the Mistley, Thorpe and Walton Railway was undertaken at the same time. This would have branched off the GER's Manningtree to Harwich line at Mistley, to serve Thorpe-le-Soken and then on to Walton-on-Naze. The competition from the Tendring Hundred Railway at Colchester proved to be too strong, while a dispute between the contractor and their labourers, meant that the Mistley, Thorpe and Walton Railway line was never completed.<sup>8</sup> By 1888 the GER had taken over the operation of the THR completely, along with the various connecting branch lines.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [www.gersociety.org.uk](http://www.gersociety.org.uk) 2018 Review of *The Mistley, Thorpe and Walton Railway* published 1946 by Thomas Peacock

<sup>9</sup> Tendring Hundred Railways – The First 150 Years. <https://www.ontrackrailusers.org.uk>

The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1870 shows the railway line and station accessed via a track off the main road from the village of Thorpe-le-Soken to the north. The station building also contained the Station Master's house. Hachures on the map to the north of the railway line indicate the levelled area that was to become the site of the Maltings. The surrounding area remained agricultural in use.

The maltings were built between 1874 and 1878 by the innovator Robert Free, who established the maltings at Thorpe-le-Soken following the submission of a patent for new drying kilns. In total Free had six patents to his name by 1895, for various malting apparatus. He had close relationships with local manufacturing specialists, such as Offwood Bendall, the machine maker based in Lawford and J.R.N. Fitch of the Lawford Iron Works, who cast his patent furnaces and made the 'steeps' or vats within which barley was soaked to begin germination.<sup>10</sup>

The Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings represent an intricately engineered, purpose-built building, for the large-scale, industrial production of malt. The establishment of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century and the repeal of the malt tax in 1880 encouraged the growth of larger, multi-storey maltings with an increased capacity.<sup>11</sup> At the time of

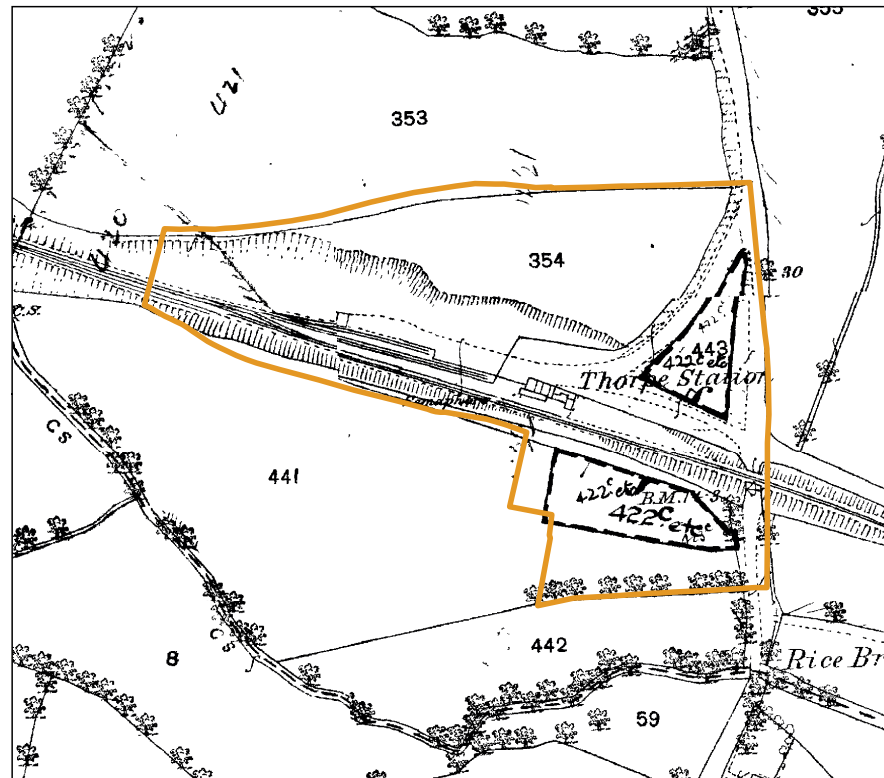


Figure 4 First Edition OS map c 1870

<sup>10</sup> Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit 2001. *Thorpe Maltings, Thorpe-le-Soken, Tendring Essex. Historic Building Appraisal* (Garwood, A. and Letch, A. Authors)

<sup>11</sup> English Heritage 2004 (Patrick, A. Author), *Maltings in England*. Strategy for the industrial environmental report No1.

their construction the maltings were at the forefront of this transformation, as they were built before the repeal of the Malt tax and within a decade of the opening of the Tendring Hundred Railway. Originally comprising two halves, the western half of the building was for the production of crystal malt, while the eastern half produced pale malt. This twin production of two types of malt was unique in the region. The two halves of the maltings were later joined, though this dual aspect can still be easily discerned. The maltings were linear in plan, with a pair of drying kilns towards the centre of the range and a third kiln added at a later date. The steeping pits were located at the east and west ends with the material being conveyed towards the central kilns during the malting process. Malt was steeped over a period of three days and was then laid on the drying floors for a further four days. The eastern range functioned as a traditional malting with the malt being dried in a kiln, while the western range had no kiln, but the crystal malt was finished in a roasting cylinder. The kilns were all fired by high quality, hard coal or anthracite and they were built with an open grid floor of patented wedge wire. A steam engine house provided steam-driven mechanisation, eventually the maltings switched to electric power in the 1950s.

By 1913 Robert Free's company, Free Rodwell and Co, was one of the country's leading manufacturers of malt but in 1956 the company was bought by Ind Coope. The Thorpe-le-Soken maltings declined in the post-war era and the last lorry left the maltings in 1983 while all operation ceased and closed down in 1985. In 1988 the building was purchased by Rosegrade Ltd, in whose ownership it has remained ever since. The building was Listed Grade II in 1998.

No other maltings building showing the double use of crystal and pale malt so distinctively are known to survive.<sup>12</sup> Robert Free later went on to form Free Rodwell and Company Ltd and by the end of the nineteenth century the company had seven maltings. Together with Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings, they represented the technological peak of the malt production industry.

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<sup>12</sup> Historic England. Maltings to the West of Railway Station, Thorpe-le-Soken Essex. List Entry Number:1385961. Listing description (accessed 21/10/19)



Figure 5 The Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings of Free, Rodwell & Co. Ltd, c1890 (From the collection of the Brewery History Society)

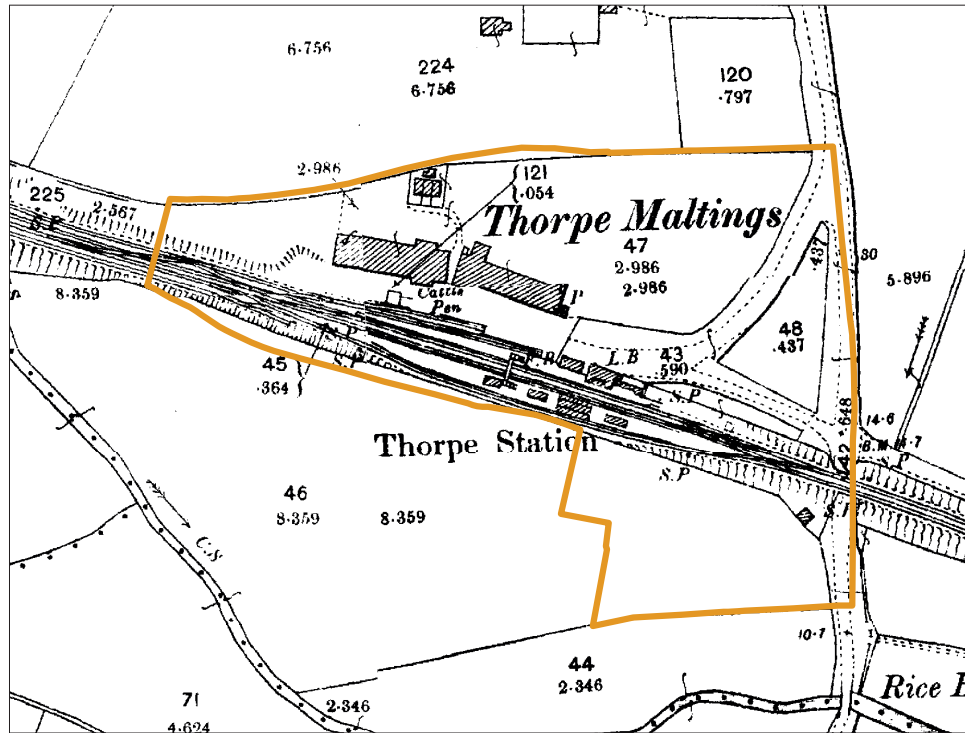


Figure 6 Second edition OS map c 1888

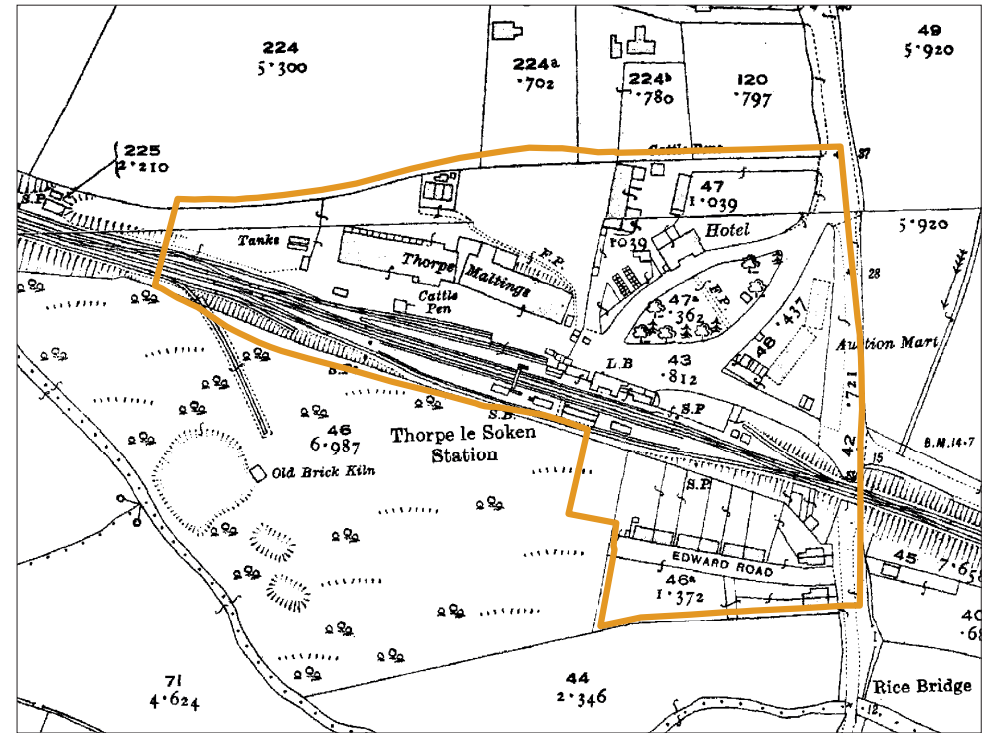


Figure 7 Third edition OS map c 1920

The second edition OS maps of c.1920 depicts the maltings buildings beside the railway line with their own siding with access directly to the track. The maltings were located by the railway to take advantage of fast transportation and improved communications, allowing for the use of cheaper imported barley from places like North America.

The second edition Ordnance Survey Map also indicates a group of three terraced cottages which were probably associated with the Maltings, situated to the north of the west wing of the maltings and within the northern area of the Conservation Area. They had been demolished by 1923 and no evidence associated with the cottages was found during the 2017 excavations.

The geological deposits of riverine clays in the land adjacent to the Conservation Area were exploited for brickmaking in the late nineteenth century. Mackenzies brickworks was located immediately south of the station and was operational from 1896; it too had a siding from the railway line. Large drying sheds and an updraught kiln associated with the brickworks are evident on the 1920s Edition Ordnance Survey Map.

During the early twentieth century there was an increase in residential development within the Conservation Area, including the construction of workers cottages for the maltings south of the railway line at Edward Road and the building of the King Edward VII Public House in 1901. The road layout was configured to accommodate the public house which is identified as a Hand hotel, as well as a number of outbuildings and structures evident on the third edition Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 7). An auction market was held on the triangle of land formed by the road layout and a group of small market buildings are evident. This was the Thorpe-le-Soken Market, which attracted crowds of visitors and was held within the open space between the King Edward VII Public House and Station Road to the south-east, though this area has now become overgrown. A cattle pen is shown on the third edition Ordnance Survey map, situated adjacent to a railway siding in what is now the station car park. The housing of cattle is also known to have occurred in the stables and coach house of the King Edward VII public house in the 1920s and it seems probable that initially, the trade in cattle was an important aspect of the market.



Figure 8 Stills from the 1968 film of Thorpe-le-Soken market by amateur film-maker Laurie Stanton. The stationmasters house and King Edward VII Public House can be seen in the background (BFI)



The market was very popular and attracted large crowds, with many coming by train, while the King Edward VII Public House provided refreshment. In 1968 the market was filmed by amateur film-maker Laurie Stanton, who was a member of the Clacton Cine Club. The short film is held in the archives of the British Film Institute and can be seen on their website.<sup>13</sup> It shows the thriving market and, in some shots, buildings within the Conservation Area can be seen. The eastern part of the market site was redeveloped in the first decade of the twenty-first century and a group of commercial buildings were constructed on the triangle of land adjacent to Station Road. In 2005 the market closed and the following year the existing commercial buildings were constructed on the site of old auction rooms in the eastern part of the market site.<sup>14</sup>

After the closure of the market, the public house and the maltings have remained unoccupied and unused. The station master's building was also empty for some years until it was refurbished and converted into two residential units. The station has remained in operation, although the northern platform is no longer in use.

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13 British Film Institute <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-thorpe-le-soken-market-1968-online>

14 Ian Tod & Co. Ltd. 2013. Thorpe Maltings Design and Access Statement 2013. Submitted to Tendring District Council on behalf of Rosegrade Ltd.

## 2.3 Heritage Assets

### Designated Heritage Assets

#### *Conservation Area Designation History*

The Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area was designated on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1990. It was designated to meet concerns about the maltings and its late-Victorian setting, before the building was given Grade II Listed status. A review of the Conservation Area and public consultation was carried out by Tendring District Council in 2005-2006 and an Appraisal document was produced in March 2006. Proposals involving suggested changes, such as a reduction of the Conservation Area boundary, enhancement work and Article 4 Directions were included in the appraisal, though it was recognised that the town or parish councils did not support some of these suggestions. As a result, no formal reduction of the Conservation Area boundary was adopted and the boundary remains the same when it was designated in 1990.

#### *Listed Buildings*

The maltings building was Grade II Listed on 27th October 1998 (List UID: 1385961). The listing description of the building was written at that time and the building has since become considerably more dilapidated. The maltings were built between 1874 and 1878 by Robert Free, the maltings industry innovator and comprised of two halves, the western half for the production of crystal malt and the eastern half for pale malt. This dual production of two types of malt for the

brewing industry on one maltings site was unique within the region. No other maltings showing the double use of crystal and pale malt so distinctively are known to survive.<sup>15</sup>

The two brick-built linear ranges of the maltings are 30 bays in length, aligned west to east and two storeys in height. They originally had an attic level, which has now mostly been lost. It is built in Flemish bond of yellow brick with red brick details and dressings. The building was constructed in a pier and panel technique visible on the external elevations and comprises thirty bays of yellow brick panels flanked by red brick piers. The roof structures were originally all of timber covered with slate. Two weather-boarded lucam hoists were incorporated into the building's southern façade, with a third added later. After closure in 1983 the maltings lay unused and empty until the buildings were purchased in 1988 by Rosegrade Ltd.<sup>16</sup>

The building is in a severely dilapidated condition, with the eastern range being propped up with scaffolding, while plant growth covers the façade in some areas. This part of the building is missing its roof and internal floor levels, with the external walls forming an empty shell. The floors, drying towers, collapsed roof structure and the unstable brick gable

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15 Historic England. Maltings to the West of Railway Station, Thorpe-le-Soken Essex. List Entry Number: 1385961. Listing description (accessed 21/10/19)

16 Ian Tod & Co. Ltd. 2013. Thorpe Maltings Design and Access Statement 2013. Submitted to Tendring District Council on behalf of Rosegrade Ltd.

at the eastern end of the eastern range were removed in 2009, due to the danger of collapse. Prior to this, a programme of archaeological building recording was undertaken in 2008, to fulfil a condition of planning consent for the work. The building recording included a photographic survey, with specific high-level access to the roof structures of the drying towers.<sup>17</sup>

The western range roof structure survives in part, but in a poor condition, though in general more historic fabric survives in-situ in the western range than in its neighbour, while the building is currently surrounded by hoarding.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine Sather & Associates. 2008. *Thorpe Maltings, Thorpe-le-Soken, Tendring, Essex. Archaeological Building Recording*. Unpublished client report for Rosegrade Ltd.



Figure 10 The eastern range of the maltings



Figure 9 Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings with the eastern range in the foreground



Figure 11 The western range of the maltings



Figure 12 A photograph taken in 1991, showing the interior of the maltings, with cast iron columns, a floor surface of setts and timber structure of the first floor (Essex County Council)



### Non Designated Heritage Assets

**The King Edward VII public house** and its associated outbuildings were built in 1901, the coronation year of Edward VII, though both appear on the OS mapping for the first time in 1923. The pub served as a railway inn to take advantage of the custom provided by the railway passengers. It is perhaps an indicator of the slower and more rural nature of the Thorpe-le-Soken area in the late nineteenth century, that the railway had been established for thirty-five years before a railway inn was a suitable investment. The building has a symmetrical design and is located in a position of prominence, in an elevated position, overlooking the eastern end of the railway yard and it is an important building within the Conservation Area and historically it was a popular meeting place for those attending the market, which operated in front of the building and extended to the south-east towards Station Road. The building and its associated stable/coach house have group value with the Maltings and the Station, as the public house became a focal point for the commercial, railway and industrial aspects of the area. Following the pub's closure the pub building was used for mixed residential and commercial purposes, while the land to the west and the stable building were initially used as a repair yard for agricultural machinery and then as a vehicle scrap yard.

The public house is built of red bricks, with rubbed brick details and has a slate covered roof. The façade is decorated with pilasters, string courses, pedimented gables and ball finials and there is an ornamental iron balcony at first floor level. To the west of the public house are the associated stables, coach house and other outbuildings, which form a range of brick-built, one and two storey structures, with a slate roof. Together the buildings are arranged around a yard to the rear of the public house. The inn and its associated outbuildings are no longer in use and in a poor condition. The public house appears structurally sound while the coach house and stables are in a more serious state of deterioration. The area in front of the public house has become overgrown, while the yard behind, between the public house and its outbuildings is overgrown. Together the buildings and the yard form an inter-related group which provides coherent evidence for past activities at the site.



Figure 13 The façade of the King Edward Public House



Figure 14 Rear aspect of the King Edward Public House



Figure 15 The stables and coach house on the left behind the public house



Figure 16 The stables and coach house of the King Edward Public House

**Thorpe-le-Soken Station Master's House** was built in 1866 by the Tendring Hundred Railway. It is a modest building, of two storeys in height, built of red brick with a sill band and dressings in gault brick and segmental stone lintels to the windows. It has a slate-covered hipped roof, with timber brackets at the eaves. The building is adjacent to the disused northern platform of Thorpe-le-Soken Station. It would have originally housed a station master and his family, who would have resided there, perhaps mainly on the first floor, with public areas, such as a waiting room, ticket office and access to the platform on the ground floor. The building lay abandoned and unused after the station ticket office was closed and an automated ticket buying facility was introduced. By 2006 the building had been restored, converted to residential use and re-occupied.



Figure 17 A photograph of the unused station master's building, taken in the 1990s



Figure 18 A photograph of the station master's building today after refurbishment and reuse as two residential properties



Figure 19 The Station Master's House looking northeast from the active station platform



Figure 20 The signal box on Thorpe-le-Soken's island platform

### Thorpe-Le-Soken Signal Box

Thorpe-Le-Soken station has an island platform to the south of the redundant northern platform. Current station buildings, such as waiting rooms and staff offices are situated on the island platform with a disused signal box. When laid in the 1860s, the railway line originally consisted of a single track and this was increased to two tracks in the 1880s. The island platform was added as part of this expansion and it appears on the second edition OS mapping (c 1888), as does a structure on the new platform in the same location as the existing signal box and it is likely that the building is of this date.



Figure 21 Thorpe-le-Soken railway bridge



Figure 22 A detail of the railway bridge

### Harwich Road Railway Bridge

is shown on the 1st edition OS map of c1869. It has an east and west brick-built pier on either side of the road, constructed of red bricks in English garden wall bond. The span of the bridge is made of cast iron composite beams and plates, riveted together. When laid in the 1860s the railway line originally consisted of a single track. But by the 1880s this had increased to a double track and the island platform was built at Thorpe-le-Soken. It is possible that the iron span was added at this time.



## 2.4 Archaeological Potential

A building appraisal of the maltings was carried out in 2001<sup>18</sup> to assess the condition of the buildings, in which it highlighted the integrity of many of the original internal features despite some deterioration of the building's structure. A further programme of archaeological building recording was carried out in 2008<sup>19</sup> prior to the removal of the drying towers and collapsed roof and the unstable gable to eaves level. The survey found that the continued deterioration of the building had resulted in the loss of some features, however the building retained its significance due to the number of extant surviving features and connection with the important innovator Robert Free.

An evaluation undertaken to the rear of the maltings in 2017 recovered post-medieval masonry remains indicating ancillary shed-like structures; which corresponded with buildings on historic mapping.<sup>20</sup>

Excavations in the north of the Conservation Area in 2017 identified prehistoric and post-medieval finds including masonry remains associated with former outbuildings; however, the stratigraphy encountered indicated extensive truncation in some of the trenches. There is potential for archaeological deposits in certain areas within the Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area which have not been disturbed or destroyed by the present structures.

The geology of this area, London Clay, is conducive to the survival of bone and ceramics, and there is the potential to the south of the Conservation Area for paleoenvironmental deposits associated with the alluvium from the valley of Holland Brook.

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18 Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit 2001. *Thorpe Maltings, Thorpe-le-Soken, Tendring Essex. Historic Building Appraisal* (Garwood, A. and Letch, A. Authors)

19 Kathryn Sather & Associates, 2008. *Thorpe Maltings Thorpe-le-Soken, Tendring. Archaeological Building Recording*. OASIS ID: kathryns1-62721

20 Archaeology South East 2017. *Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching, Thorpe Maltings, Thorpe-le-Soken*. Site code TSTM17



## 3.0 Character and Appearance

### 3.1 Summary of Special Interest

The overall distinctive historic character of the Thorpe-Le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area is as a nineteenth century railway and industrial complex, but within a rural setting. The Conservation Area encompasses a distinctive collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings. These embody the commercial and social changes resulting from the opening of the railway over a hundred and fifty years ago. The railway connected the village of Thorpe-le-Soken (situated approximately 700m to the north), with Colchester and the coast at Frinton-on-Sea and Walton-on-the-Naze. As was the case with many railway ventures, the construction of the line and its various stations through this part of rural Essex was a speculative development. As a result, the station was modest in size and built to an established pattern adopted by the Tendring Hundred Railway and intended to serve a rural community.

The most prominent of the buildings within the Conservation Area is the maltings, which was constructed at this location to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Tendring Hundred Railway, for supply and distribution. The Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings were innovative in that two types of malt were produced on an industrial scale, within the purpose-built building. No other maltings showing the double use of crystal and pale malt so distinctively are known to survive<sup>21</sup>. The maltings are also significant due to their connection with Robert Free who formed Free Rodwell and Company Ltd and by the end of the nineteenth century, the company had seven maltings. Together with Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings, they represented the technological peak of the malt production industry. The railway continued to provide the impetus for development within the Conservation Area into the early twentieth century. The opening of the King Edward VII Public House in 1901 is evidence for the extent to which visitors were traveling by rail to Thorpe-le-Soken, many of who came to visit the market that was held on the area of open land to the east of the public house. The area around the maltings became a popular destination and in particular the market and the pub were once a focal point for the local community. The pub is a local landmark and is still fondly remembered within the local area. The workers cottages on Edward Road represent the continued growth and prosperity of the maltings and the immediate locality. The character of the Conservation Area is therefore typified by mid to late Victorian era railway, industrial and domestic architecture, within a rural setting. Together, the stock of differing buildings within the Conservation Area forms a interconnected and unified group.

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<sup>21</sup> Historic England. Maltings to the West of Railway Station, Thorpe-le-Soken Essex. List Entry Number: 1385961. Listing description (accessed 21/10/19)

### 3.2 Character Appraisal

#### Land usage

The Conservation Area has a variety of uses and functions and can be divided into two parts, based on function. The first is the historic, commercial and industrial core, centred on the maltings and the railway, which includes the King Edward VII Public House and the site of the former market. The second area is centred on the residential development along Edward Road on the southern side of the railway tracks.

#### The Historic Core

The maltings buildings and the King Edward VII Public House are currently unused. The buildings are owned by Rosegrade Limited, who are in the process of producing a proposed scheme for the development and reuse of the buildings. At the centre of the Conservation Area is the Station and its car park. The land on which the station is situated is owned by Network Rail and leased by Greater Anglia, while the station car park is managed by National Car Parks. The car park forms a sizable open space at the centre of the Conservation Area and is flanked by the railway station on the south side and the maltings to the north. This historic core is therefore characterised by the architecture of the industrial and railway buildings, along with the former public house and market area.



Figure 23 The view west from the station car park



Figure 24 The view east from the station car park.



Figure 25 The station Masters House with the signal box of Thorpe-le-Soken station behind

### Maltings

The maltings building is the foremost feature of heritage value within the historic core and also has the most dominant presence within the Conservation Area. But currently its aesthetic and architectural value is difficult for the observer to appreciate as much of the building is obscured by scaffolding, hoarding or foliage, while other distinctive elements, such as the roof and its drying towers, are no longer present. The building retains architectural features typical of mid-Victorian industrial buildings, with walls composed of yellow brick in Flemish bond, with piers, details and brick details and dressings.





**The Station**

Within Thorpe-le-Soken station there are two notable and prominent buildings which enhance the character of the Conservation Area. These are the former Station Masters House and the Signal Box. The Station Master's House has distinctive, mid-Victorian detailing with rounded arches, stone lintels and yellow brick door and window surrounds. The original timber windows have been replaced with modern UPVC, and these detract from the character of the Conservation Area. The canopy, over the now-disused platform survives, along with the decorative timber dagger-boarding.

The two storey signal box, probably built by the Great Eastern Railway, is likely to date to c 1888 or shortly after. It is built on a brick base at ground floor level. The first storey level is glazed with large timber windows with surviving original ironmongery and an external walkway to enable the cleaning of the glass. Other single-storey railway structures are situated on the active railway platform and these make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. There are architectural details such as the original fenestration of the station buildings, or the cast iron brackets which bear the monogram of the Great Eastern Railway, which took over the operation of the railway line in 1888.



At the eastern end of the station area is the area of the former market, part of which has been redeveloped with commercial buildings. These modern buildings have been built with a brick plinth, black painted weatherboarding and tiled roofs, to reference the form and appearance of a traditional Essex agricultural building. No earlier, historic weather-boarded, barn-like structures were historically known to have been located within the Conservation Area. The buildings can be considered to have a neutral effect on the character of the Conservation Area.



Figure 26 The commercial buildings built on part of the former market site

### King Edward VII Public House

The area around the King Edward VII Public House has become overgrown, which has reduced the building's visibility from the rest of the Conservation Area, yet it still remains a prominent building and glimpses of it can be seen from within the historic core. The building is in a characteristic, Edwardian style, with decoratively embellished south-eastern and north-eastern principal facades. It is constructed of red brick in English bond, with a light-coloured cement mortar and a slate roof.

The decorative elements of the building provide a distinctive architectural pallet, executed to a high standard. Such character defining features could influence future development within the vicinity of the building and the historic core of the Conservation Area. An elaborately worked wrought iron balcony dominates the main façade and this has a bulbous rounded shape at its base. This distinguishing shape to a balcony is thought to have been designed in order to accommodate the full dresses that were



Figure 27 Details of the King Edward VII Public House



worn by Edwardian ladies at the time. The balcony has cast iron brackets and there are two slender pillars supporting it at the front of the building.

The windows within the principal façades have horns on their upper sashes. There are decorative, moulded brick surrounds to the windows with pilasters and bricks laid with finer pointing, while the main façade has leaded window light and coloured glass above the doors and windows. The north-east façade has a bay window, while there are rubbed brick lintels, recessed brick panels below windows and decorative terracotta tiles are also used. The upper parts of the building are decorated with stone baubles.



Figure 28 Former stables and coach house

The rear, or north-western, façade and the and south-western façade are more understated, though a combination of straight and segmentally-arched, rubbed brick lintels are used above the sash windows.

To the rear of the public house the former stables and coach house also contribute to the distinctive historic character of the Conservation Area through their architecture and appearance. The building forms one range, with a slate covered roof that varies in height. Window openings on the ground floor have segmentally arched brick lintels, while the upper level windows are just below eaves level. The windows themselves have numerous glazing bars and are characteristic of the type used in stable buildings. A loading loop with a triangular brick pediment is situated in the centre of the main part of the building, presumably to allow hay to be loaded into the upper floor. The stables range is in a poor condition.

### Edward Road

The character of the Conservation Area alters along Edward Road, where residential development was completed at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century. A terrace of two-bay cottages was built along the northern side of the newly formed Edward Road. The use of the name Edward would suggest that the date for the development corresponds to that of the public house, which was named to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII in 1901.

The entrance to the Edward Road from Station Road is flanked by a pair of narrow, single-bay, semi-detached dwellings. Although the private residential properties have undergone alterations to their appearance, reflecting the tastes of their owners, they retain much of their original character and appeal. The buildings were brick-built in Flemish bond, with stone lintels and sills to the ground floor windows, while the windows of the first floor continued into the roof space with a half-dormer. The most unaltered example is perhaps Number 3 Edward Road, which has exposed original brickwork, a slate-covered roof, four-pane sash windows with horns and decorative ridge tiles.

An attempt to replicate the character of the Edwardian buildings has been recently made in a new development at the western end of Edward Road, where a brick-built terrace has been built within the Conservation Area. The new buildings have stone dressings to the windows and half dormer windows to the first floor. The use of slate rather than ceramic tile as a roofing material would have perhaps been more in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area (though many slate tiles have been replaced with ceramic examples on the original buildings), but in general the form, massing and appearance of the new buildings is sympathetic to the Conservation Area.



Figure 29 Semi-detached dwellings flanking the entrance to Edward Road from Station Road



Figure 31 Edward Road looking east



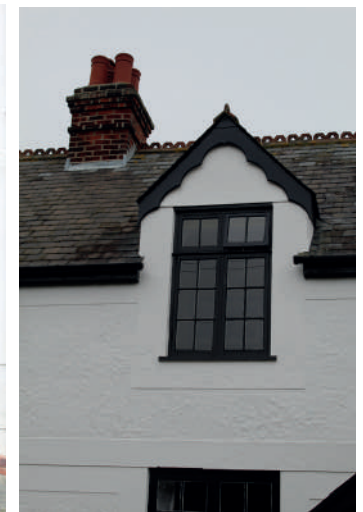
Figure 30 A glimpsed view of the chimneys of the Edward Road buildings



Figure 32 Number 3 Edward Road



Figure 33 A new residential development at the western end of Edward Road



## Landscaping

### Boundary treatments

There are a variety of boundaries within the Conservation Area. The boundaries within the historic core include the boundary of the station, which changes from a wire fence with concrete posts to steel railings. On the opposite side of the station carpark the maltings are bounded by temporary wire fencing. Both these examples of boundary treatment detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

The boundary of the market buildings makes a neutral contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. A hard boundary in the form of a brick wall, and a soft boundary or hedge are used. The brick wall is built in stretcher bond and has inverted arches between brick piers, with a double course of tiles used below the coping. Although the use of brick is in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area, a wall of this design, in stretcher bond does not have a precedent at Thorpe-le-Soken Maltings.

The bridge over Station Road includes a substantial brick abutment with an adjoining wall which extends into the Conservation Area. Overall this provides a prominent and distinctive boundary of red brick in Flemish bond.

Elsewhere, soft boundaries of foliage or well-kept hedges are evident and have a neutral effect on the character of the Conservation Area. On Edward Road modern timber fences have been erected near the junction with Station Road, which are a more suburban form of boundary treatment. These form the boundaries of the rear gardens of semi-detached dwellings. Front gardens are scarce in the Conservation Area, with only two prominent examples on Station Road, both of which have modern front walls of varying materials. The focus of future planning decisions in relation to boundary treatments, towards a coherent form, either brick-built walls or well-tended hedges, would help to preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.





### **Built forms**

The maltings are an extensive built form within the Conservation Area, being over thirty bays in length. Originally the roof was greater in height with drying towers at the centre of the building, though the majority of the building is two storeys in height, plus an attic level. The commercial buildings now on the site of auction buildings associated with the former market are also of a significant scale, replicating agricultural barns in both appearance and size. Single storey and two storey buildings are located at the station, while the residential buildings on Edward Road are modest in size and two storeys in height.

The built forms that define the character of the Conservation Area are varied, according to the phases of development. The earliest buildings, being the station and the maltings represent a momentous development towards the areas of industry and infrastructure, with the maltings in particular dominating the area. The later residential development is more modest in scale.

Examples of architectural styles to be found within the Conservation Area include the striking mid-Victorian buildings of the maltings and station, to the highly decorative and elaborate Edwardian building of the public house. The stables and coach house behind the King Edward VII Public House are characteristic of late nineteenth to early twentieth century utilitarian buildings associated with the era of

horse drawn travel. The domestic buildings of Edward Road are in a well-established, domestic style while the commercial buildings on the site of the market represent a modern interpretation of a traditional style of Essex agricultural building.

Brick predominates as a building material, along with the use of slate for roofs and decorative ridge tiles on domestic buildings. Varying colours of brick are used to achieve decorative effects in the Station Master's House and the maltings. The Station Master's House also incorporates stone sills and lintels. The King Edward VII Public House includes decorative ceramic tiles, orange rubbed bricks, terracotta tiles and stone baubles. Timber window frames survive in the public house, while the buildings of the maltings and the houses on Edward Road would also have had timber window frames. Certainly in the latter case, these would have been timber sash windows, with horns to the upper sashes and one complete set of such windows survived on a house in Edward Road. Most examples here have been lost and replaced with UPVC, which has a detrimental impact on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The careful application of controls in planning applications for changes to fenestration, or specifications for new buildings within the Conservation Area, could result in the re-establishment of sash windows as a predominant form and so enhance the area's special character.

### 3.3 Views

Key views are identified on Figure 34. The views included are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there are numerous other views of significance. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or its environs, should consider the views below and any others which may be relevant or bespoke to that proposal. It is also notable how these views alter in character between winter and summer months which must be taken into account.

#### Viewpoint 1

From the south, a sweeping, long-distance view of the Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings can be gained from the same road, looking north, across the open fields, which form the setting of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area can be perceived to be lying within its valley in the rural landscape. On a clear day the maltings, the King Edward VII Public House and the station buildings can be clearly seen. Prior to its loss, the tall roofs of the maltings' drying towers formed a prominent landscape feature that could be appreciated from this viewpoint.

#### Viewpoint 2

For those arriving at the Conservation Area from the station there are long distance, panoramic views that can be perceived from the foot bridge, which is the only means of access and egress from the station platform. The view south from the foot bridge takes in the open landscape of the Conservation Area's setting, while to the east, a view across the entire station complex can be appreciated. The view north from the foot bridge allows a comprehensive view of the Listed maltings building. To the north-east the King Edward VII Public House can be seen on the rise in the topography, behind the east wing of the maltings. The market area and its new buildings and the open space of the station car park can also be seen from this vantage point.

#### Viewpoint 3

The hill upon which the King Edward VII Public House is situated affords views south, across the Conservation Area and the wider landscape beyond. The Station Master's house and the signal box are clearly visible, with a backdrop of open agricultural land behind up to the horizon.

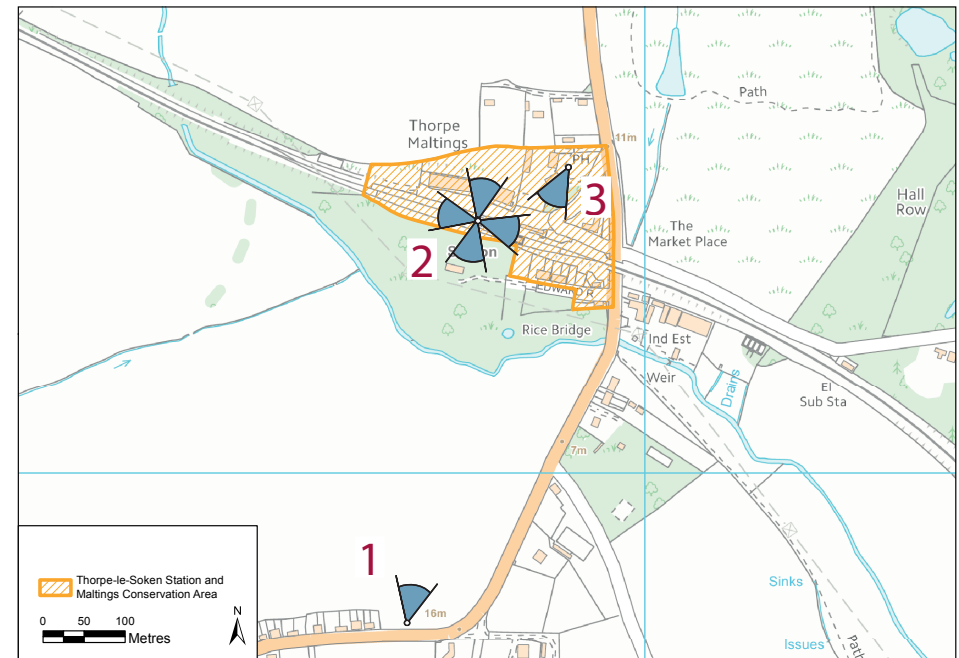


Figure 34 Views map





Figure 35 Viewpoint 1



Figure 36 Viewpoint 2 looking south from the station footbridge



Figure 37 Viewpoint 2 looking east from the station footbridge



Figure 38 Viewpoint 2, looking north-east



Figure 39 Viewpoint 2 looking north-west



Figure 40 Viewpoint 3 looking south



### 3.4 Setting

A heritage asset's setting is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as "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 the asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."

All heritage assets have a setting, whether designated or not, although the setting itself is not designated. The importance of a setting is dependent on the contribution it makes to the significance of the heritage asset and the appreciation of its significance.

In the case of the Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area, the wider setting of the heritage asset is distinctly rural in nature. It is within this rural landscape, the railway and subsequently the maltings were established and later the market evolved, as the area became a focal point for commerce, train travel and industrial production. The area is generally surrounded by open fields on all sides, with only a few residential buildings to the south-east, along with the Rice Bridge Industrial Estate to the east. To the south, within the setting of the Conservation Area, Station Road is carried over Holland Brook by Rice Bridge. Holland Brook is discernible from some distance away, as a line of foliage at the lowest point in the surrounding countryside. Rice Bridge is a brick-built structure, built of both black and red bricks, with a coping of double-bullnose engineering bricks. These are both prominent landscape features within the Conservation Area's setting and the bridge over the brook forms an entry point to the Conservation Area from the south. Outside the Conservation Area boundary, but within this part its setting and fronting Harwich Road, is the Grade II Listed

Ricebridge Cottage (List UID: 1337143), an eighteenth-century timber framed and plastered rural cottage with a thatched roof.

There are features within this rural setting that are noteworthy. Running to the east, from a junction with Station Road is Thorpe Park Lane, which is a narrow, metalled lane, overhung with mature trees, which runs parallel with the rail tracks, before diverting from them. It eventually leads to the Grade II Listed Thorpe Park Farmhouse, a Grade II Listed seventeenth-century, timber-framed house with early nineteenth century alterations (List UID: 1307196). The farmhouse and its access lane (which was probably altered with the coming of the railway) are representative of the established, agricultural landscape and its community, within which Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings were developed.

In the wider setting to the north of the Conservation Area is the estate of Thorpe Hall, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (List UID: 1000521). The Manor of Thorpe Hall dates to the middle ages and while the estate and Hall are managed and in single corporate ownership, it is thought to be unoccupied.

A group of new residential dwellings are situated in the immediate setting to the north of the Conservation Area. These are no more than two storeys in height and although modern in design, generally the materials that have been used are in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area, with brick walls to the front garden and a weather boarded outbuilding.



Figure 41 The setting of the Conservation Area to its south



Figure 42 The fields running down to Holland Brook, in the setting to the south of the Conservation Area



Figure 43 New buildings to the north of the Conservation Area Boundary



Figure 44 Rice Bridge and the open rural landscape to the south of the Conservation Area



Figure 45 Holland Brook, from Rice Bridge



Figure 46 The view east along Thorpe Park Lane, which leads to the Listed Thorpe Park Farmhouse



Figure 47 The King Edward VII Public House visible through the new buildings to the north of the Conservation Area

## 4.0 Opportunities for Enhancement

### 4.1 Heritage at Risk

The Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area is on the Historic England Heritage at Risk register and its condition is considered to be 'very bad', while its vulnerability is listed as 'high' and the trend is towards 'deteriorating significantly'.

Being a Grade II Listed building, rather than Grade II\* or Grade I, the maltings building is not included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register. Yet the building is a unique heritage asset of significance and is in a very poor condition.

The Conservation Area is facing a number of issues, the most pressing of which is dereliction. The maltings, the King Edward VII Public House and its curtilage buildings are in a poor condition and unoccupied. A large proportion of the Conservation Area is therefore underused, although there still remains the potential for buildings and areas to be brought back into use.

A significant portion of the maltings building has been lost through dereliction since the area's designation in 1990. The building is Grade II Listed and as a designated heritage asset, its future survival is at risk. The eastern range in particular has been reduced to a shell after its floors, drying towers, roof structure and the eastern brick gable were removed

in 2009, due to the danger of collapse. The western range is also in a very poor condition, though in general more historic fabric survives in-situ. However, the continued loss of original fabric and in-situ architectural details through dereliction is a cause for concern.

The King Edward VII Public House appears to be in a better condition than the maltings, though its unused state and its overgrown surroundings present a picture of abandonment, similar to that of the maltings. The stable and coach house building which is located within the curtilage of the public house are also in a state of decay, with structural problems.

The poor condition and lack of use of these buildings is having a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area, though its significance and historic character remains. The state of the buildings means that they are increasingly vulnerable to further collapse or demolition, particularly if the Conservation Area becomes the focus of new development. The loss of the derelict buildings within the Conservation Area would result in harm to its significance.



Figure 48 The Edward VII Public House viewed from the northern approach road to the station



Figure 49 The stable and coach house building

## 4.2 Public Realm

The Conservation Area is located adjacent to the main approach from the south towards the village of Thorpe-le-Soken, which is situated roughly 600m to the north. The Conservation Area also forms a gateway for those arriving at Thorpe-le-Soken by train. As passengers arriving at Thorpe-le-Soken leave the station, the dilapidated building, surrounded by hoarding and scaffolding is the first structure encountered.

Some signs around the historic core of the Conservation Area appear to be redundant, or have lost their lettering and become illegible and could be removed or replaced. Temporary works in this area have also resulted in plastic cones, barriers, plastic piping and other items which have been left and which harm the area's character. The area would be enhanced through a consistent approach to the design of lampposts, signage and bollards, particularly in the historic core around the station and maltings.

The approach to Thorpe-le-Soken from the south along Station Road provides another gateway into the Conservation Area. Although the historic buildings are not initially visible from the road, the new commercial buildings on the site of the former market buildings have a presence on this route and indicate the boundary of the Conservation Area. Station Road has two bus stops situated close to the north-eastern boundary of the Conservation Area and station. The road currently has a speed limit of forty miles per-hour, and no pavements on its eastern side, which makes crossing the road to and from the southbound bus stop difficult. To the south, cars are often parked in the area below the railway bridge, perhaps in order to avoid the parking fees at the station car park. This results in a choked area of pavement on the edge of the Conservation Area.



Figure 50 The view of derelict buildings of historic interest, on the opposite side of the station car park, which greets visitors arriving by train at the railway station



Figure 51 Buildings within the Conservation Area, beside the approach to the village of Thorpe-le-Soken from the south



Figure 52 The bus stop on Station Road



Figure 53 Cars parked under the rail bridge on the edge of the Conservation Area





## 5.0 Management Proposals

As described in the previous chapter, there are a wide range of issues facing the Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This Chapter seeks to recommend management proposals which address these issues in both the short and long term.

### 5.1 Positive Management: Short Term

The positive management of the Conservation Area in the short term should focus on good practice and improved ways of working within the local planning authority. These are generally low cost and can be implemented within a short time-frame, typically within one or two years.

#### Local List

Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings would benefit from the Local Planning Authority adopting and maintaining a comprehensive Local List in order to recognise buildings of local architectural or historic interest and better preserve its historic environment. A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. A Local List may be beneficial to ensure the upkeep of buildings which are significant to the history and character of Thorpe-le-Soken. The exercise would also facilitate a greater understanding of the area and could be utilised as a public engagement strategy to improve awareness and understanding. There are certainly buildings within the Conservation Area which

are of sufficient quality and historic interest to be considered for local list status. These are:

- The King Edward VII Public House and associated stables and coach house
- Thorpe-le-Soken Station Masters House
- Thorpe-le-Soken Station Signal box.

#### Enforcement

Where the necessary permission has not been sought for alterations, such as advertising signage and building alterations which are not contained within the General Permitted Development Order, the Local Planning Authority's powers of enforcement should be considered. This could assist in reinstating any lost character or architectural features whose loss may have a negative cumulative effect on the Conservation Area, as well as avoiding a precedence being set for similar, uncharacteristic works.

#### General Maintenance: Public Realm and Highways

Through the agreement of a standard good practice within the Conservation Area between relevant Local Authority teams and other landowners, long term goals can be set to promote good design within the public realm, such as ensuring that excessive road markings are avoided, highways are maintained and that signage is kept minimal and clear, as well as agreeing a standard street furniture to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or

replaced. This will have a long term positive impact on the Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area.

A positive working interdepartmental relationship is key to improving the public realm and highways. Planning and Highways can work together to agree standard good practice within a Conservation Area such as avoiding excessive signage and where necessary using narrow road markings.

#### Boundary review

The Conservation Area boundary has been revised within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2021) and Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2018). In general the boundary was robust and only the alteration of the boundary to exclude a small area of scrub on the southern edge of the Conservation Area is proposed.

#### Public Realm

Whilst replacing all inappropriate street furniture is an optimum solution it is acknowledged that this is an expensive project to undertake. There are numerous other short-term solutions to this problem. A positive working interdepartmental relationship between the Local Authority and the various stakeholders is key to improving the public realm.



The Highways Department and Network Rail should be engaged to conduct an assessment of existing signage within the Conservation Area with the view to 'de-clutter' the historic environment. Other case studies have found this was a cost-neutral exercise due to the scrap value of signage and posts. Planning and Highways should work together to agree standard good practice within the Conservation Area such as avoiding excessive road markings and where necessary using narrow road markings. The various stakeholders at Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings could be encouraged to work together to agree on subjects such as standard street furniture, to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced.

### Heritage Statements

In accordance with the NPPF (Para.194), applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

All applications within the Conservation Area and immediate setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement. Any application without a Heritage Statement should not be validated.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, tree's or highways on key views

should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the conservation area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (March 2017). Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated.

### Tree Management

Trees that are either located in a conservation area or covered by a Tree Preservation Order or planning condition have a degree of protection. Where a tree is protected consent must be given by the council in writing before any works can be undertaken, including cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, severing roots, wilful damage or destruction. Where trees contribute to local amenity and the character or appearance of the conservation area their retention and appropriate management will be encouraged. If felling is necessary due to the condition of the tree (dead, dying or dangerous) then an appropriate replacement tree should be planted.

### Improved understanding and awareness

At present there is no interpretation (information boards, signage, interactive QR Codes) within the Conservation Area, aimed at improving public awareness of the historic significance of the area. The introduction of information boards would be one effective way to enhance the wider

understanding of Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings and the significance of the Conservation Area.

### Public Resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area. In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their property in an appropriate manner. A single Good Practice Design Guide on standard alterations such as signage, windows, doors, rainwater goods, boundaries and roof extensions will ensure inappropriate development does not continue to be the accepted norm.

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Thorpe-le-Soken's built heritage.





## 5.2 Positive Management: Long Term

### Appraisals

It is important that the Conservation Area is reviewed every five years to monitor change and inform management proposals.

### New development potential

It is recommended that the Local Authority undertakes a proactive approach to unlocking the abandoned historic buildings or redevelopment, including consideration of the use of tools such as the preparation of Development Briefs, Design Codes, and potentially Compulsory Purchase and land assembly to bring them forward for regeneration. This could be combined into a single project and adopted policy document.

The Conservation Area presents many opportunities for new and inspiring development. In particular a development that would include the refurbishment and reuse both the Maltings and the King Edward VII Public House and their surrounding areas. However, a sensitive, successful and viable scheme has yet to be found, as the significance of the Listed building and the Conservation Area raises a number of challenges, which increase the complexity of any proposal. Yet the scale and rail-side location of the Maltings building could potentially offer great opportunities for local regeneration and economic growth.

There may be some pressure to focus on a wholly residential use for the Maltings and a residential development may

provide major returns, which would need to be channelled back into the restoration of the historic buildings. However, other options or a mix of uses could also be considered. The following two case studies provide a brief account of the development of two former industrial sites. The circumstances and the setting of both cases is somewhat different to that at Thorpe-le-Soken and both were not without significant challenges. Yet they demonstrate workable approaches to the redevelopment of an abandoned nineteenth century industrial site, with a view towards mixed use and local regeneration.

### Salisbury Maltings

In 2019 Wiltshire Council submitted a Masterplan for the redevelopment of the former maltings in Salisbury along with an area of car park.<sup>22</sup> The Salisbury scheme proposed a mixture of uses including residential, retail and a cultural quarter, integrated with a framework of interrelated public access routes, including pedestrian and cycle routes and a coach park. Retail unit sizes were a mix of major shop units and a majority of smaller store units. A new location for the Salisbury Library within the development is also included in the scheme. A process of public consultation was undertaken in 2017. The constructive debate that followed was an important aspect, which allowed the public and the developers to recognise the challenges and opportunities of

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<sup>22</sup> Wiltshire Council, 2019. The Maltings and Central Car Park Masterplan. <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/spp-spd-maltings-and-central-car-park-masterplan-2019-june.pdf>

the scheme.<sup>23</sup>

### Shrewsbury Flaxmill and Maltings

Another example at the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings site incorporated Grade I, II and II\* Listed buildings. Historic England took leadership of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project in March 2014 and along with funds from the Department for Communities and Local Government and the European Regional Development Fund, Historic England provided the balance of funds to complete the project in 2015.<sup>24</sup> Extensive option studies were undertaken to consider a range of potential new uses. It was considered essential to find a new function that would ensure the viable, long-term use and maintenance of the site. Along with the commercial opportunities available as a result of the scheme, Historic England undertook a heritage skills programme during the construction works. An important consideration during construction was to minimise intrusive work to the historic fabric of the buildings, and use traditional materials and techniques wherever possible. The scheme resulted in a combination of one hundred and twenty new residential units, offices and commercial premises. The historic pedigree of the site is an asset for the site and the development provided the opportunity for tenants and investors to become the occupiers of the world's first iron-framed building and invest in the development of the remaining historic buildings. Opportunities for new build

<sup>23</sup> Salisbury Civic Society. The Maltings <http://www.salisburycivicsociety.org.uk/current-issues/the-maltings/>

<sup>24</sup> Historic England Shrewsbury Flax Mill <https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/visit/shrewsbury-flax-mill/>



development on the land surrounding the historic buildings were also provided.

### **Options for development**

The potential for regeneration at Thorpe Le Soken, including mixed use development adjacent to the railway station presents a number of options. A beneficial course of action would be the production of an Options Appraisal for the area and its surroundings, leading potentially to a masterplan and design code. With a view to this, engagement with Historic England, land owners and other stakeholders would be valuable.

### **Small scale developments**

Smaller scale developments, such as applications for individual, detached dwellings are also viable within the Conservation Area. However any proposed scheme should be submitted as part of a detailed and full application, rather than an outline application. Only a full application, with details showing the materials, form and scale of the proposed scheme will allow the local authority to assess the impact on the character and appearance of a proposal. Any scheme will need to adopt an approach that considers the character of the Conservation Area, as described in this appraisal, in order to ensure the scheme does not have a detrimental impact on the special historic interest of the area.

The Council should guide development in a positive manner by:

- Engaging with developers at an early stage through the

Pre-Application Process to ensure modern development is high quality in design, detail and materials.

- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

### **Opportunities for enhancement**

A clear opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be through investment to improve the public realm. This can be achieved through a consistent approach towards an improvement of hard surfacing and street furniture.

There is also clearly opportunity for a substantial improvement to the character of the Conservation Area, through the renovation and reuse of the grade II listed maltings and the King Edward VII Public House and its associated outbuildings. The refurbishment and reuse of these historic buildings would also bring substantial benefits and enhancement to the Conservation Area.

### **Article 4 Directions**

An Article 4 Direction is made by the local planning authority to restrict the scope of permitted development rights and can increase the protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings. If an Article 4 Direction is in effect, a planning application will be needed for any development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Article 4 Directions are therefore a useful control in relation to any works that could threaten

the character or special interest of a conservation area. An Article 4 Direction therefore helps to manage inappropriate change in Conservation Areas, and on key non-designated heritage assets included on the Local List.

There is currently no Article 4 Direction in effect within the Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings Conservation Area. If the significance of a Conservation Area is considered under threat, or if significant development is likely within the area, leading to great change, an Article 4 Direction is strongly recommended to better preserve the Conservation Area's special interest.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The long-term monitoring of the Conservation Area is recommended in order to assess any gradual changes or cumulative detrimental harm to the character of the area. Review documents assessing and identifying any threats to the character and special interest of the Conservation Area would be a useful tool in the long-term management of the Heritage Asset. This document should be updated every 5 years.



### 5.3 Funding Opportunities

There are four main funding opportunities which would assist in the execution of these plans:

#### **National Lottery Heritage Fund**

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is the single largest dedicated funder of heritage in the UK and therefore is the most obvious potential source of funding. Funding is often targeted at schemes which preserve, enhance and better reveal the special interest of the area whilst also improving public awareness and understanding. Grant opportunities and requirements change overtime, for up-to-date information on NLHF schemes Tendring District Council should consult their appointed Heritage Specialist.

#### **Section 106 Agreements**

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon Thorpe-le-Soken Station and Maltings. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site specific improvements.

#### **Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)**

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is a programme run by Historic England to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. As the name suggests, the scheme forms partnerships with local

authorities (along with any additional funding partners) to facilitate the regeneration of an area through the conservation of its built heritage. The scheme makes funds available to individuals to enable them to carry out repairs or improvement works to their property to enhance the area. This would be suitable to preserve and enhance either the shop frontages or the architectural detailing.

## 6.0 Appendices

### 6.1 Legislation and Planning Policy

LEGISLATION/POLICY/ GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (2021) DCLG	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2014) DCLG	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets	
National Guidance	Historic England (2019) Statements of Heritage Significance Advice Note 12	
National Guidance	Historic England (2018) Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Advice Note 1)	
Local Policy	Tendring District Council Local Plan (2007)	QL9 – Design of New Development QL11 – Environmental Impacts and Compatibility of Uses EN1- Landscape Character EN17- Conservation Areas EN20- Demolition within Conservation Areas EN21- Demolition of Listed Buildings EN22- Extension and Alterations to Listed Buildings EN23- Development within the Proximity of a Listed Building



## 6.2 Glossary (National Planning Policy Framework)

Term	Description
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. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
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. Heritage asset 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.
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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