

Local Development Framework
Evidence Base

Foulness Churchend
Conservation Area Appraisal and
Management Plan



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Foulness is a remote estuarine island set in the Essex coastal marshes, and is one of a group of islands largely formed from reclaimed grazing marshland of medieval and post-medieval date. There are two villages in the north of the island, Churchend and the smaller hamlet of Courtsend. Churchend provides the focus for the island's only conservation area. Foulness has been controlled by the military for many years, and is used as a testing ground for munitions. In 2003 QinetiQ was awarded a contract to carry out this work, and access to the island is now managed by them. The MoD retains ownership of the island.
- 1.2 Conservation areas are 'Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Government Planning Policy Guidance 15, Planning and the Historic Environment, emphasises that the character of conservation areas derives not simply from the quality of individual buildings, but also depends on 'the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular "mix" of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of space between buildings' (para. 4.2).
- 1.3 Designation of a conservation area extends planning controls over certain types of development, including extensions, boundary treatments, the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees. However it does not prevent any change and the area may be subject to pressures (good and bad) that will affect its character and appearance. The remote and marshy location of Foulness, and its long history of control by the MoD, has largely protected the village of Churchend from alteration. However it still faces pressures for change that threaten the character of the village, including demand for modernisation and improvement of existing properties.
- 1.4 Rochford District Council commissioned Essex County Council to prepare this conservation area appraisal and the research and fieldwork were carried out in August 2006.
- 1.5 The appraisal provides a brief development history of the current settlement, followed by a description and assessment of character. The contribution of its different elements to the character is identified. Any issues which may affect the protection of character will be highlighted and opportunities for enhancement identified.

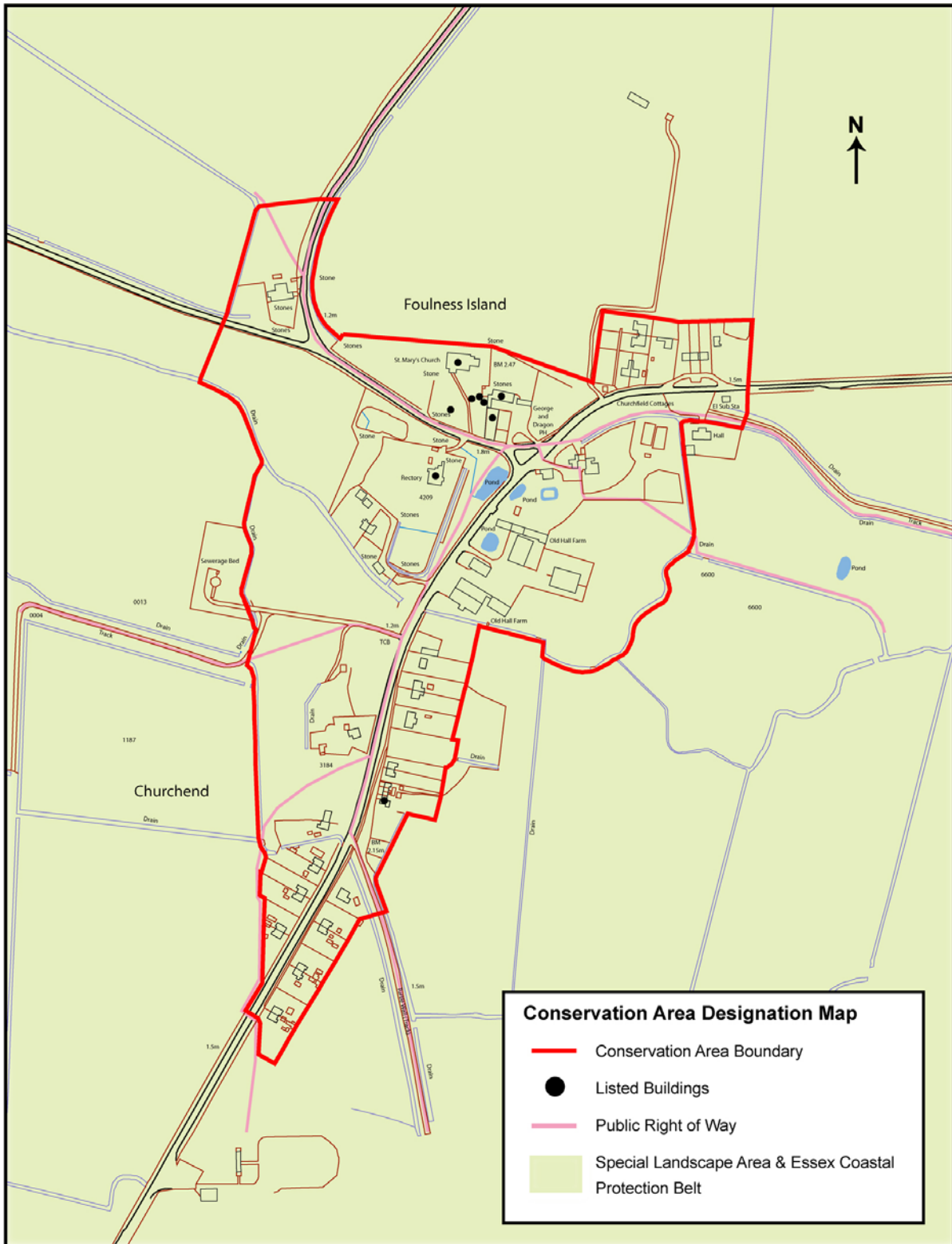
2. CHARACTER STATEMENT

2.1 Churchend is a small, well preserved village with a special character that owes much to its remote estuarine location, the difficulties of access and the long association of the island with military operations. These particular circumstances have largely protected the village from redevelopment, and created a tight-knit community. The village has coalesced over several centuries to become the island's principal settlement, with successive phases of development expressed in its appearance today. Originating as an isolated medieval manor settlement within an enclosed marsh, the village has changed little since the last major phase of building undertaken by the War Department in the 1920s. This saw the construction of the military spinal road through the village which provided the basis for linear development to the south, whilst the historic core remained as a loose arrangement of cottages and other buildings. A varied but limited palette of traditional building materials, most notably white weatherboard, yellow stock brick and clay tiles, coupled with unassuming architectural design, provides cohesion in the built environment. Whilst modern agricultural buildings at Old Hall Farm are visually out of step with the historic architectural character of the village, they are a reminder that this is a working agricultural environment. The unique landscape setting is a vital component of the special character, with frequent expansive views out and a network of ancient tracks and ditches binding the village to its surroundings. Trees, broad green verges, large gardens and green open spaces make an important contribution to a spacious and verdant appearance. At times the modern utilitarian interventions of the MoD in the public realm with a profusion of street furniture and road markings conflict with the otherwise gentle, informal and rural character of the village.

3. STATUTORY PROTECTION WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA (Fig. 1)

- 3.1 Foulness Churchend conservation area was designated in March 1992.
- 3.2 There are nine listed buildings or groups of buildings of special architectural or historic interest in the conservation area. These are the George and Dragon pub, the walled garden to the south of the pub, the parish church, three headstones and a further group of three headstones in the churchyard, the Old Rectory, and a row of cottages known as Kents Cottages. These are all Grade II listed.
- 3.3 There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the conservation area.
- 3.4 There are eight public rights of way in the conservation area marked on the Definitive Map of footpaths in Essex. However for safety and security reasons these rights of way may be subject to byelaws restricting public access under the terms of the Military Lands Act.
- 3.5 There are no trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders in the conservation area. However trees within the conservation area enjoy protection in as much as anyone within a conservation area carrying out works to a tree must give written notification to the local planning department at least six weeks beforehand.
- 3.6 The conservation area lies within a Special Landscape Area (SLA), designated as being of great landscape value. The Crouch/Roach marshes SLA consists of a number of islands, creeks and channels with salt marsh, mudflats, and drainage ditches predominating. There is a presumption against development in the SLA unless it accords with the character of the area. Further information on the special landscape character of Foulness and Maplin Sands is contained within *Landscape Character Assessment of the Essex Coast*¹.
- 3.7 The conservation area lies within the Essex Coastal Protection Belt, which recognises the special and undeveloped character of parts of the Essex coastline.

¹ This document was commissioned by Essex County Council and Schéma d'Aménagement Intègre du Littoral and aimed to collate current information about landscape character of the Essex coast in a structure designed to help inform future planning decisions. It is available through the Essex County Council website.



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Fig. 1 Churchend conservation area map showing statutory designations within the conservation area.

4. PLANNING POLICIES

- 4.1 Rochford District Replacement Local Plan was adopted in June 2006. Its objectives include promoting a green and sustainable environment, improving the quality of life for people in the District, and the maintenance and enhancement of local heritage.
- 4.2 The Replacement Local Plan includes specific planning objectives to protect and enhance the historic character of settlements, particularly within conservation areas, and to formulate and publish a detailed assessment of each conservation area, indicating townscape features, buildings and spaces that distinguish the character of each conservation area, to be taken into consideration when new development is being proposed.
- 4.3 The Replacement Local Plan contains policies (BC1-2) formulated to ensure the preservation of the special character of the conservation areas and to promote good design within them. Further guidance for the assessment of proposals for development in conservation areas is provided in Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document 6.
- 4.4 Rochford District Council sets out its policy with regard to the protection of SLAs in Policy NR1 of the Replacement Local Plan. This policy states that development will not be allowed unless its location, size, siting, design, materials and landscaping accord with the character of the area in which development is proposed.
- 4.5 The Coastal Protection Subject Plan, a statutory plan adopted in 1984, defined the extent of the coastal areas within Essex where there would be the most stringent restriction on development due to the special character of the open and undeveloped coast. Policy CC1 of the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan embodies the commitment to the Coastal Protection Belt. Policy NR10 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan sets out the local planning authority's approach when considering rural and undeveloped areas of coastline with the Coastal Protection Belt, and states that applications for development will not be granted planning permission unless it can be shown that the development would not adversely affect the open and rural character of the coastline, or its historic features, wildlife or geological features.
- 4.6 The conservation area lies within the salt water floodplain, and is designated to be at risk of flooding. Flood risk is a material planning consideration. Policy NR11 in the Replacement Local Plan sets out the local planning authority's approach to development proposals within flood risk areas.

5. LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Location and context

- 5.1 Churchend is a small village settlement on Foulness Island, a remote estuarine island on the Essex coast. It is approximately five miles from Great Wakering which has a range of local services, and eight miles north of the conurbation of Southend.
- 5.2 Foulness is owned by the Ministry of Defence, and the marsh sands of the island are used as a proving ground for munitions. Access on and off the island is controlled by QinetiQ Shoeburyness who run the operational business on behalf of the MoD. The MoD is the principal freeholder of property on the island, with a handful of exceptions that include the church, rectory and the old schoolhouse in Churchend.
- 5.3 Despite the military ownership there are large areas of arable cultivation on the island.
- 5.4 Foulness Island is a civil parish within the jurisdiction of Rochford District Council.
- 5.5 There is a population of just under 200 in the parish, which in 2001 comprised 87 households. Employment on the island is provided by the MoD and QinetiQ, as well as in agriculture.
- 5.6 In addition to scattered military installations, Foulness is characterised mostly by dispersed settlement in the form of small, isolated farmsteads. Churchend is the larger of two villages in the north of the island, the other, Courtsend, being little more than a hamlet.

General Character and Plan Form

- 5.7 Churchend is a small rural village on the main road that runs through the island known as the spinal road, constructed by the MoD in 1922. Prior to the building of this road, an irregular network of older tracks and roads provided access to key buildings, including the church, the manor house and associated farm, the pub, the school and the windmill (now demolished). The conservation area is triangular in form, extending northwards from number 32 Churchend in the south to the former Primary School in the north-west and Churchfield Cottages in the north-east. This encompasses the older historic core of the settlement along with the 20th century linear development that extends southwards along the MoD road. The village green lies at the heart of the village, in front of which the main road turns east with a subsidiary road heading west passing the school.

Landscape setting

- 5.8 Foulness is the largest of six islands that make up the Essex archipelago at the confluence of the River Crouch and the River Roach. The island covers about

6,310 acres. The other islands in the group are New England, Havengore, Potton, Rushey and Wallasea. It is part of an open estuarine system with a varied landscape comprising grazing marsh, saltmarsh, inter-tidal mudflats, cockleshell banks, sand-flats and arable. The landscape is flat, with occasional scrub and low lying trees.

- 5.9 The surface geology is composed of varied marine sediments which extend seawards to form most of Wallasea, Foulness and the Roach archipelago as well as the eastern Dengie peninsular. The soils here are generally deep and clayey or silty clays, with fluctuating groundwater levels and risk of flooding. Water is controlled by a complex system of drains and ditches, some retaining the curves and bends of natural watercourses, others more regular.
- 5.10 The landscape is characterised by abundant evidence of historic settlement and field patterns reflecting a long history of development and land reclamation and which are essential features of the special landscape character of the island². The land is criss-crossed by old roads and tracks, often on the earthworks of relict sea walls and counter sea walls, some of medieval origin, which protected the island from inundation. The ancient 'Broomway', possibly of Roman origin and still a public right of way, survives in the inter-tidal area. Historic field boundaries can be identified in the present field pattern with areas of reclaimed pre-18th century drained curvilinear fields and post 18th century rectilinear drained fields, and some later enclosure. Around the conservation area are some large arable fields where historic boundaries have been lost.
- 5.11 The wider landscape of Foulness and Maplin Sands is of national and international natural conservation importance, and is protected by a number of ecological designations. Foulness is internationally famous as a haven for wildlife, and at low tide the broad flats that extend seawards are home to large numbers of wildfowl and feeding waders. Parts of the island and the adjoining Maplin Sands are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) specifically for their importance to wild birds. The intertidal zone is within the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The sands and parts of the island are a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), as well as being designated a Ramsar site. The special status of parts of the island and its wider environment are recognised in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan with areas designated as Wildlife Sites and Sites of National and International Nature Conservation Importance. The Plan sets out a range of policies with regard to protection of natural resources, including policies NR5 (European and International Sites), Policy NR6 (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), and Policy NR7 (Local Nature Reserves and Wildlife Sites).
- 5.12 The importance of the wider landscape was further recognised in 1994 when parts of the Essex coast including the whole of Foulness were designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now DEFRA). This agri-environmental scheme, now closed to new

² More information is contained within the *Rochford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project* produced by Rochford District Council and Essex County Council.

applicants, offered incentives to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural practices which would safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particular high landscape, wildlife or historic value. The Essex coast was considered nationally important because of its extensive areas of grazing marsh and river valley grassland that display historic farming and land reclamation patterns, and support a wide range of wildlife.

- 5.13 The landscape setting is a defining aspect of the special character of Churchend village conservation area, with open spaces and gaps between buildings and scrub providing constant expansive views out. There are distant views to the low, broad horizon beneath open skies. The high-rise developments of Southend are visible on the skyline to the south, with views to the distinct low hill of Canewdon to the west. Boats can be seen moving along the estuary, their white sails visible above the low lying land. Looking seaward towards the sands to the east plumes of smoke occasionally rise from the firing range. Old tracks and ditches extend out from the village into the landscape. The settlement edge is ill-defined, merging seamlessly with the agricultural and estuarine landscape beyond.



Fig. 2 Drainage ditch looking east from Old Hall Farm.

6. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 A wealth of archaeological features and deposits has been recorded from Foulness Island suggesting occupation at an early date. There is evidence of Romano-British settlement and burial, including the Scheduled Ancient Monument site at Little Shelford which produced Roman Coarseware pottery and human remains. A number of 'red hills', salt production sites likely to be of Iron Age or Roman date, are known and are concentrated on the marshland and inter-tidal inlets, and there have been pottery and other archaeological finds dating from the Roman period.³
- 6.2 The island was first embanked against inundation from the sea sometime in the 13th century, rendering the island more habitable by the medieval period. Until the mid-16th century when the island became a separate ecclesiastical parish Foulness was shared by the mainland parishes of Sutton, Rochford, Shopland, Little Stambridge

³ A summary of known archaeological sites as well as an overview of historic buildings can be found in *Appraisal of known archaeological sites and historic buildings for site management statement for the land owned and occupied by Defence, Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA), Foulness Island*, a typescript document prepared by Bob Crump in 1998 and available in the EHER. Extensive archaeological survey work has been carried out by the local archaeological society.

and Little Wakering. The coastal marshlands provided valuable grazing land for sheep for the distant parishes. These divisions pre-dated the Domesday Survey of 1086, and in common with other areas of Essex coastal marshland that were divided between mainland parishes, Foulness is not mentioned by name in the Survey. The manor of 'Fulness' is first mentioned in 1235, and was one of a number of enclosed marshes each independently protected from the sea by an enclosing wall⁴. Many of these ancient internal or 'counter' walls with associated ditches that flooded with the tides can still be seen on the island. What is now the village of Churchend lay within the enclosed marsh of South Wick, also known as Foulness Hall Marsh or Old Hall Marsh, within which the manor house stood. The marshes or wicks supported large numbers of sheep which were especially prized as a source of dairy produce – milk, butter and particularly cheeses – as well as for their meat, skins and wool. The number of cattle grazed on the marshland in comparison was relatively small. By the 15th century there was also a considerable amount of arable land within the manor of Foulness, and the sands off the south and east coasts of the island supported an important inshore fishery.

- 6.3 In addition to the enclosed marshes, successive 'innings' over several centuries reclaimed land from the saltings. The first of these took place in 1420 A.D., and each innings was protected by a newly constructed sea wall. Roads and tracks were sometimes built along the top of these walls, which can still be seen as field boundaries and farm tracks. The final intake took place in 1833. These innings produced highly fertile soils that were ideal for arable cultivation.
- 6.4 It is likely that the resident population in the medieval period was small, living in scattered shelters, isolated farmsteads and moated sites⁵. However the population was such that a licence was granted for the building of a chapel on the island in 1283⁶, prior to which residents were expected to attend church in their distant parishes. The exact location of this is not known but it is likely to have been close to the site of the present church at Churchend.
- 6.5 In the 16th century the population expanded rapidly, perhaps as an increasing proportion of land became devoted to crop growing rather than pasture, requiring a larger labour force. The 17th century witnessed a substantial influx of Dutch settlers, who may have arrived to repair and extend embankments and help reclaim land. The old chantry chapel at Churchend was replaced by a timber-framed parish church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, Thomas the Martyr and All Saints in the 1540s, located to the south-east of the present church. Settlements were dispersed across the island. Writing in the 1760s Philip Morant describes the houses as standing separately 'for the convenience of occupiers', and as being 'all of wood which soon decay'. There were 19 farms on the island at this time, and the manor

⁴ The name itself derives from two Saxon words, '*fugla*' meaning wild birds and '*næss*' meaning promontory (Reaney, 1935).

⁵ There are two earthwork sites within the Churchend conservation area listed in the EHER that may be associated with medieval settlement in the village, including a moat (2796) in the area of Old Hall Farm and an undetermined earthwork south of the present church (2794). See Appendix 2 for map.

⁶ This is recorded in a document held in Prittlewell Priory Museum.

house, then known as Foulness Hall, stood near the church⁷. The dispersed settlement pattern can be seen in the Chapman and André map of 1777 (*Fig. 3*). This map shows the small settlement around the church and the old hall at Churchend, with properties arranged to the north and south at the end of the roadway leading from the Quay, an important landing point on the river. A cottage built in the 17th century survived close to the church until the early 20th century⁸. Two cottages to the east of the church had been converted to a public house by the late 17th century, and this survives as the George and Dragon pub. Another roadway leading from the waterside provided a focus for linear development at Cotes End (Courtsend), where the Kings Head received its first Ale House Licence in 1589. Some farmhouses survive scattered across the island from the early post-medieval period, including Ridgemarsh Farmhouse and Priestwood Farmhouse. During the Napoleonic War two semaphore bases were established on the island, manned by the Rochford Hundred Volunteers who were stationed just outside Churchend.

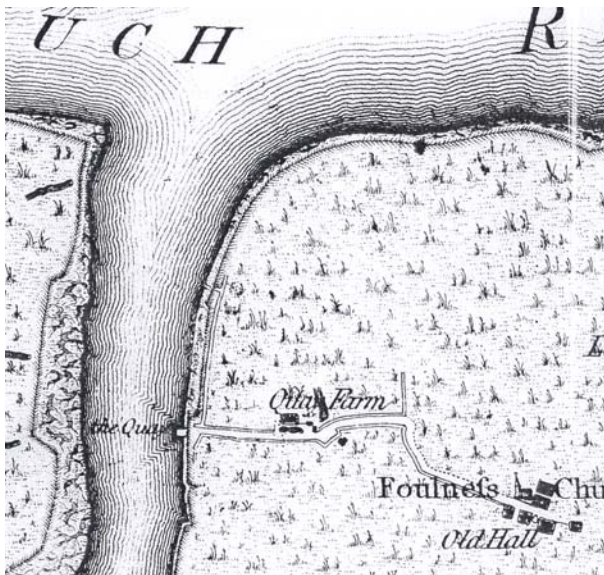


Fig. 3 Detail of Chapman and André map of Essex, 1777.

- 6.6 By the time of the tithe commutation in 1847 there were 4,544 acres of arable land, 783 acres of pasture and 338 acres of inland water including drainage ditches, ponds etc. The remaining 222 acres comprised houses, barns, farmyards, church and churchyard, sea walls and chases, cottages and gardens and waste land⁹. Up until the mid 19th century, the predominantly male population had a reputation for being rough and lawless, the island providing a refuge for fugitive criminals. Foulness was famous for its bare-fist fighters, and many of the bloody encounters took place in what is now the walled garden in front of the George and Dragon pub.

⁷ *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, Philip Morant, 1763-8, 324.

⁸ This cottage is mentioned in the RCHME *Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex* vol. 4, 47

⁹ *Foulness*, J.R. Smith, 1970, 20

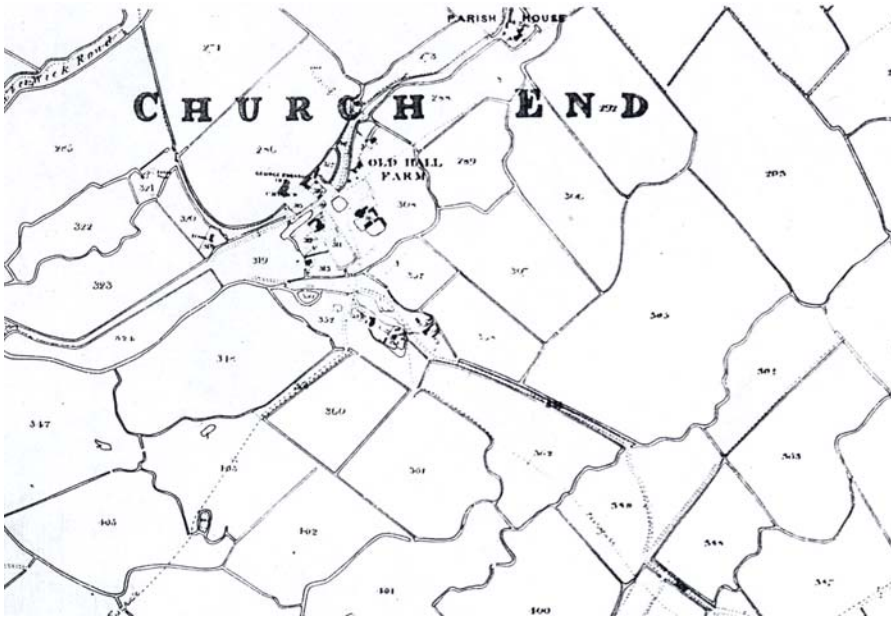


Fig. 4 Tithe map of Churchend,

c.1847.

6.7 The population rose steadily during the 19th century, rising from 396 inhabiting 43 houses in 1801, peaking at 754 in 1871 living in 127 houses. Housing conditions in the early part of the century were unhealthy and overcrowded, but there was a marked improvement with the building of new housing over the next few decades. By 1805 a post mill had been erected at Churchend, extending the village southwards with associated buildings that later included the main stores for the island. In 1825 a former pub to the north east of the village became the parish poor house (now demolished). Other new buildings appeared during the 19th century, including a new schoolhouse for 120 children built in 1846 north-west of the church. Some of the principal village buildings were rebuilt, including the old manor house, rebuilt around 1850. The church was rebuilt in 1850 in Kentish Ragstone to the designs of William Hambley of London, with extra funds from the Elder Brethren of the Corporation of Trinity House for the addition of a tall spire to signal landfall for mariners. A new rectory was built in 1846. One of the most significant improvements was the discovery that fresh water could be obtained by digging deep boreholes into the ground. Prior to this there was no regular supply of fresh water, much to the detriment of the health of the population. The social and welfare improvements made in the first half of the century were such that in 1867 the historian Philip Benton wrote ‘... nowadays, thanks partly to the supervision of police and improved tone of morals, the spread of education, a greater care for their souls by their minister, and the spread of religious principles, Foulness is not behind the parishes of the mainland in morality. Crime is now rarely heard of, and a resident policeman is considered unnecessary.’¹⁰

¹⁰ Benton, *The History of Rochford Hundred, Foulness*, 1867, 214

6.8 Foulness Island's long association with the military began in 1855 when the War Department established an artillery practice and testing range at South Shoebury overlooking Shoebury Sands, a continuation of Maplin Sands. By the end of the 19th century the decision had been taken to acquire the island and its offshore sands for a weapons development establishment. This involved acquiring the lordship of the manor which comprised about two thirds of the island, as well as purchasing farms outside the manor. By the end of the First World War the whole island was in the hands of the War Department with the exception of a handful of buildings. The island played an important role in weapons testing and research during World War II and the Cold War. A large number WWII military sites remain on the island, including the MoD firing range at Eastwick, heavy anti-craft gun platforms, pillboxes and Nissan huts, as well as post-war installations.

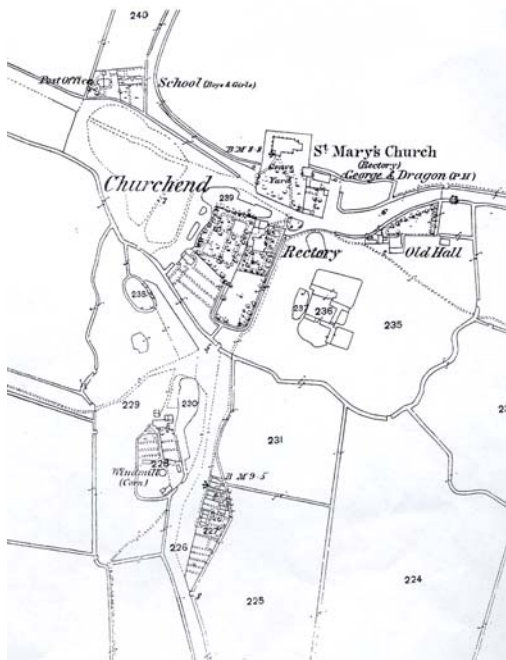


Fig. 5 The 1st edition OS map, 1873.

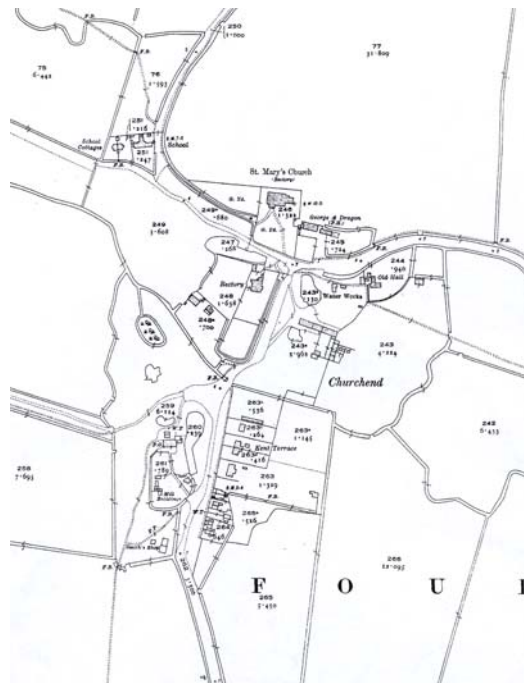


Fig. 6 The 3rd edition OS map, 1921.

6.9 The island underwent another significant phase of development in the 1920s under the auspices of the War Department, which included demolition of some of the older buildings such as the old windmill. Residents had long contended with the difficulty of access around the island with rough unmade roads and tracks and plank bridges across ditches. There was no bridge from the mainland, and apart from ferries the only route was at low water along the Broomway, a treacherous track across Maplin Sands about a quarter of a mile from the shore. In 1922 the new military road from Great Wakering was opened creating a direct link with the mainland and a route along the spine of the island. The new road in part followed an older byway through Churchend village. A number of brick and weatherboarded cottages were built in the village at this time, some of modern cavity wall

construction with flush toilets and baths, extending the village further southwards along the new road.

- 6.10 Despite the preventive measures taken to protect the island from the sea over the centuries, Foulness still experienced inundations, the worst of which occurred on the night of 31st January 1953 when severe gale-force northerly winds coinciding with a spring tide resulted in the greatest surge ever recorded (*Fig. 7*). Although the War Department had increased the height of the sea walls, the huge waves whipped up by the wind swept over them, inundating the island. Foulness was left completely cut off from the mainland with neighbouring islands submerged, and telephone, gas and electricity lines broken. Two people died, and 335 were eventually evacuated. In addition, a remarkable rescue operation was carried out under appalling conditions to save hundreds of stricken livestock. The tally of animals eventually evacuated included 400 cattle, 72 sheep, 670 chickens and four budgerigars¹¹. The land eventually recovered from the ill-effects of salt water saturation, and a tree-planting scheme was introduced to replace trees swept away by the flood waters.

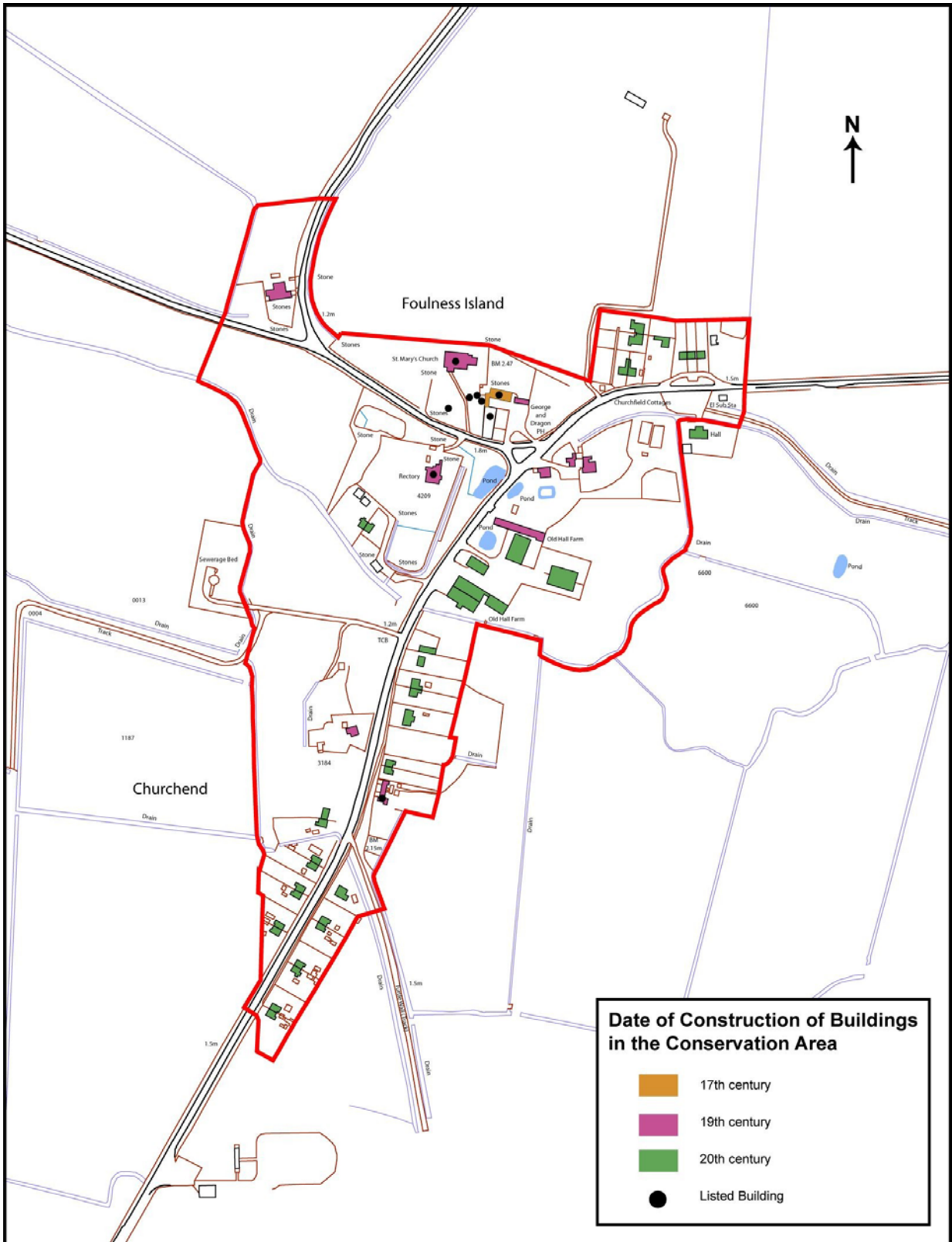


*Fig. 7 Churchend after the 1953 flood looking north. The church and rectory are marooned in the top left, with Old Hall Farm opposite, its haystacks swept aside by the flood waters. Nos 15-18 Churchend are to the south.
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- 6.11 In the late 1960s Maplin Sands was considered as a potential site for a third London airport, which would have involved reclamation of 18,000 acres of the sands, but the project was abandoned.

¹¹ See Smith, 1970, 33-37

6.12 The island today has a small population of just under 200 people concentrated mainly in the villages of Churchend and Courtsend. It is a close-knit population with a strong sense of community. There are few local services available on the island.



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Fig. 8 Date of construction of buildings in the conservation area.

7. CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Spatial Analysis

- 7.1 The military road provides a modern framework for the village, approaching it from the south before turning east opposite the pub with a subsidiary route branching west. The conservation area boundary is loosely drawn around the village, the settlement having no clearly defined edge, using old watercourses, ditches, tracks and rear property boundaries.
- 7.2 The spinal military road passes through expansive flat marshlands and arable fields dotted with occasional isolated farmsteads and military buildings before reaching Churchend. Distant views of the church tower at Churchend rising above trees and scrub indicate the presence of the village. The road marches dead straight towards the village, taking on a gentle and more deferential route through the historic settlement before continuing eastwards. The curve of the road makes an important contribution to the informality of the area (*Fig. 9*). Neat pairs of white semi-detached weatherboarded cottages announce the village. They are set in a regular arrangement with an even building line, but set back in generous plots with low front boundaries or open to the street so that there is little sense of enclosure. Wide green verges border the road, contributing to the rural character of the village, and a historic grassy track known as Turtle Wall leads away to the south east (*Fig. 10*).



Fig. 9 Spinal road looking west.



Fig. 10 Turtle Wall.

- 7.3 Further north brick and weatherboard cottages line the road behind front gardens and verges on the east side until the scene opens up at Old Hall Farm by a water-filled ditch. Here the landscape opens out with expansive views to arable land between unenclosed farm buildings that generally run perpendicular to the road (*Figs 11, 12*). To the west the arrangement is informal with occasional properties, some barely visible behind trees and scrub, and wide

verges. A broad green open space provides views west where an unenclosed cart track heads towards the sewage treatment works.



Fig. 11 Old Hall Farm.



Fig. 12 Old Hall Farm.

7.4 Trees narrow the view looking north along the road towards a grassed traffic island where the main road turns east at some yellow brick cottages with the secondary route branching west (*Fig. 13*). This marks the historic core of the village. Here the view opens up with the wide road junction and village green. The scene is dominated by the attractive white weatherboard façade of the George and Dragon public house, a landmark building in the village. Adjacent to this a gravelled car park in front of the shop contributes to a spacious quality. The village green is a broad, loosely defined grassed area edged by low trees and scrub along its northern and eastern boundaries. The green has an open setting with agricultural fields to the north. The shingled spire and multiple gables of the church are important features in the

scene, with churchyard trees contributing to the green setting (*Fig. 14*). The village green provides a vital central amenity space not just for the villagers but for the island as a whole.



Fig.13 Spinal road looking north towards the road junction.



Fig. 14 View across the village green looking west, with the George and Dragon and shop to the left.

- 7.5 As the main road turns eastwards at the village green it deviates from the route of the old byway which still exists alongside it as a wide grass verge with occasional trees (*Fig. 15*). Yellow stock brick semi-detached cottages on the north side of the road are set back in attractive gardens, with an open plot between. An unenclosed track heads off behind these cottages from the road along the field edge leading to other properties to the rear. The irregular positioning of properties and large plots contribute to the informal rural character of the conservation area. As the road leaves the village to the east, the conservation area takes in a poorly maintained gravelled parking area with recycling bins. Behind this is the village hall, a dilapidated building excluded from the conservation area and set in an open, unkempt plot. These spaces do little to enhance the attractive appearance of the conservation area. The old byway that once led on to the parish workhouse is a historic route that continues eastwards away from the village hall.



Fig. 15 The wide verge along the spinal road as it turns east, marking the route of the old byway.

7.6 Where the road branches west the low brick boundary wall of a pretty listed walled garden in front of the George and Dragon pub backs the footway. This wall is an important and prominent boundary feature, with a picturesque view across the garden to the pub. The wall continues past the churchyard and where it ends the boundary is defined by a low hedge marking a more recent extension to the churchyard (*Fig. 17*). As the road continues west out of the village the landscape setting opens up again with views across arable fields to the south. The long brick school building marks the western edge of the village and of the conservation area (*Fig. 16*). This building, now an excellent heritage centre, is set far back behind attractive gardens on an old track that heads off to the north towards Nase Wick. The old school playing field that is concealed behind tall conifers provides parking for the heritage centre.



Fig. 16 Looking west towards the old school.



Fig. 17 Looking east into the village with the churchyard boundary to the left.

Character Analysis

7.8 The existing built environment of Churchend village comprises an irregular arrangement of properties derived from a series of phases of development over several centuries, with 1920s development to the south taking on a regular but open settlement pattern. The medieval origins based on the church and manor provide the historic focus for the village, now reflected in the informal arrangement of mostly 19th century buildings close to the village green, including the church, rectory and Old Hall farmhouse. Few buildings remain from 17th century infilling that resulted from population increase. Early buildings were timber framed, although few of these survive in the village today. Most were swept away during subsequent phases of redevelopment. The George and Dragon is a notable exception and an important survival from this early phase. Soft red brick was introduced by the 18th century, and although it is not a dominant material today it can still be seen in places. Extensive rebuilding in the mid-19th century introduced yellow stock brick,

and a good survival of buildings from this date reflect reforms and improvements made during that period, notably under the patronage of George Finch, who owned the manor from 1826. Finch provided funds towards the rebuilding of the church and the rectory, and for the school. The village extended southwards at this time, and some of the Victorian development survives, notably the weatherboarded Kents Cottages. The outbuilding at 4a Churchend may provide evidence of the former industrial complex that existed around the old windmill. The principal linear development to the south that exists today derives from the intervention of the War Department with the regular arrangement of mainly residential properties in the form of brick or weatherboarded cottages built to address the new spinal road in the 1920s. The village was further shaped under military ownership by the demolition of some older properties, including the old windmill, workhouse cottages and school cottages.

- 7.9 Despite the organised rebuilding programme undertaken by the War Department after the First War, the result is not overly formal and rigid, with the older historic settlement form still evident. The design of the buildings was simple and modest, with properties set back in large plots with gardens. A mixed but limited range of materials was used, including stock brick, weatherboard, and a mixture of plain clay tiles and slate roofs. This contributes to the pleasing visual character of the village, whilst also offering a degree of cohesion.
- 7.10 The conservation area exhibits a variety of architectural styles and forms that reflect these various stages of its evolution and that contribute to the character of the streetscape. Simplicity and restraint in design and scale are characteristic, and there are few decorative embellishments. The predominant building type is the modest semi-detached two-storey cottage of the 1920s, rectangular in plan, with simple hipped roofs. However other buildings that have played an important role in the life of the community add architectural and historic interest and contribute to the texture and variety of the conservation area.

Materials and detailing

- 7.11 The conservation area exhibits a varied but limited range of materials that are an important characteristic of local distinctiveness. Brick is much in evidence, principally yellow stock brick from the Shoeburyness brick fields used from the mid-19th century and laid in Flemish bond or stretcher bond (although an older farm building displays areas of English bond). Occasionally earlier soft red bricks can be seen (*Fig. 18*). Weatherboard is the other dominant exterior wall treatment, and is generally painted white on front elevations and black to the side, although historic photographs suggest that this is a relatively recent approach, with tar a more likely historic finish. There are a small number of rendered buildings painted white, including the Old Hall and agricultural outbuilding by the village green.



Fig. 18 Local soft red and yellow stock brick, laid predominantly in English bond, on old farm building.

7.12 Traditional roofing materials are either slate or plain clay tiles. Historic photos show that clay pantiles were also used. Slate roofs sometimes have red ridge tiles. Roofs are pitched and gabled or hipped at around a 45° pitch, and are sometimes gently canted towards the eaves. Rooflines are simple and dormers are absent.

7.13 The traditional fenestration consists of small paned vertically sliding sashes, eight over eight or six over six being common. In brick buildings windows have flat or shallow segmental arched window heads. Pentice boards are used where there is weatherboarding. Small paned casements are also seen. Timber window joinery is generally painted white or black. There appear to be few historic doors that have survived, although there are some older part-glazed doors with small panes, and some examples of vertically boarded doors that have survived on Kents Cottages. Doors may be located to the front or the side, and are sometimes sheltered under small mono-pitched porches or beneath flat canopies on brackets (*Fig. 19*).



Fig. 19 Small paned casements and sash windows, traditional door with simple canopy, no.18 Churchend.

- 7.14 Traditional domestic front boundary treatments are generally of a type appropriate to a rural setting, with low timber post and rail fences, picket fences and hedges being common traditional forms. Vari-coloured walls of local brick in Flemish bond are also a feature, particularly for higher status properties such as the church, the rectory, and Old Hall farmhouse, as well as the walled garden to the front of the pub.

Individual contributions to character

- 7.15 The George and Dragon is a landmark building at the heart of the village, with its prominent white weatherboarded façade, small paned sashes, hipped grey slate roof and distinctive ridge tiles (*Fig. 20*). It is believed to have originally been constructed in the early 17th century. Philip Benton, writing in 1867, notes that it was once two cottages, but was converted to a pub in the late 17th century. As well as the strong visual contribution it makes to the street scene, the pub has an important place in the social and cultural history of the village, not least because of its dubious association with bare-fist fighting. Fights took place in the walled garden in front of the pub, and local legend has it that the high wall between the churchyard and the garden was put up at the request of a reforming vicar so that the congregation could not see these bloody contests. The pub is Grade II listed, as is the 18th century walled garden. The wall of the garden is constructed of vari-coloured local brick. Adjoining the garden and at right angles to the pub is a small single storey pitched roofed brick building with recessed sash windows and a single chimney. It has a mid-19th century appearance, and may have been a wash house or a brew house.



Fig. 20 The George and Dragon pub viewed across the walled garden.

7.16 The garden wall continues along the footpath edge to the churchyard, which is entered through iron gates. The parish church is Grade II listed, and was built around 1853 in an Early English style to the designs of William Hambley (*Fig. 21*). It is constructed of roughly squared grey Kentish Ragstone rubble with stone dressings. A distinctive feature of the church is the range of three steeply pitched grey slate roofs, gabled to east and west. The south tower with its octagonal shingle tower hipped at the base has a noticeable lean. The tower is an important landmark in the flat landscape, marking the location of the village in distant views. The churchyard is partly owned by the Parish Council, and contains a good survival of early gravestones and associated ironwork. A well-cared for war memorial is a feature near the entrance. A number of gravestones are Grade II listed, including the earliest in the churchyard, a headstone memorial for Jonas Allen, dated 1698. The churchyard encompasses the site of the previous timber church, unmarked as such but indicated by the monuments to the rectors Thompson, Ellwood and Archer that, according to Benton¹², once lay within its walls. The churchyard is mostly laid to grass, and is well maintained with mature trees and hedges. The churchyard has been extended in recent years as the old yard became full, which had prompted fears that in the future interment would have to take place on the mainland. The extension is an open grassed area bordered by hedgerow that would benefit from some further tree planting in keeping with the more historic churchyard in order to soften the landscape.



Fig. 21 St Mary's Church.

¹² *The History of Rochford Hundred: Foulness*, 1867, 205

- 7.17 Opposite the church lies the Old Rectory, and this remains church property. It is an elegant stock brick building of 1846, with a shallow hipped grey slate roof and small paned hornless sashes, but with remnants of an earlier late 17th or early 18th century building (*Fig. 22*). The back kitchen was rebuilt in 1793 and survived the 19th century rebuild. The house and grounds are given privacy by the surrounding high boundary wall and trees growing within the grounds as well as outside. The wall is constructed of vari-coloured brickwork, including soft red bricks likely to be from the earlier phase of construction as well as 19th century local stock bricks. The Old Rectory is Grade II listed.



*Fig. 22 The Old Rectory, photographed from within the grounds.
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- 7.18 On the east side of the spinal road at 10-14 Churchend are Kents Cottages, a picturesque Grade II listed terrace of white weatherboarded mid-19th century timber framed cottages with a later addition of a cross wing (*Fig. 23*). This is an important survival of vernacular timber-framed cottages, where many were demolished and rebuilt by the War Department as part of the improvements in the 1920s. They have grey slate roofs with red ridge tiles, with a decorative bargeboard on the cross wing gable. The front entrances have small open fronted and weatherboarded mono-pitch porches with corrugated roofs,

and there are small paned sash windows with black painted joinery.



Fig. 23 Kents Cottages.

Contribution of unlisted buildings

- 7.19 There are a number of unlisted buildings within the conservation area which make an important contribution to its special character, generally relating to 19th century improvements or to the 1920s rebuilding programme. Many of these were formerly on the Rochford District Council Local List of Buildings of Architectural, Historic and Townscape Importance, and the Local Plan included a specific policy with regard to protecting these buildings. The replacement plan contains no such provision and these buildings are vulnerable to change. All the buildings described in 6.19 to 6.28 were previously on the Local List.
- 7.20 The old school and schoolhouse which mark the western extremity of the conservation area are an important survival from the Victorian improvements (*Fig. 24*). The school has a special significance in the social history of the community, and reflects a time when the island was more populous than it is today. Constructed of local yellow stock brick widely used in the village at the time, the building reinforces the character derived from the local palette of materials, but has a distinct building form related to its use, with a long low pitched roof range and hipped roof cross wing. Although the arrangement of window openings is original, the windows themselves were replaced with a more modern glazing pattern some time ago. The school playground is still extant, along with some of the outbuildings, retaining evidence of former use. A pair of cottages that once stood alongside the school was demolished soon after WWII. Whilst the school building used as a heritage centre is MoD property, the school house remains that of Essex County Council.



Fig. 24 Former school, now heritage centre.

7.21 An interesting group of buildings associated with the manor and the farm are located along a driveway opposite the village green. These include the Old Hall farmhouse, adjacent weatherboarded cottage and a disused agricultural building at the entrance to the drive. The Old Hall is a white rendered building of around 1850, with a south facing front façade looking onto farmland over a low brick boundary garden wall (*Fig. 25*). In the context of the other domestic architecture of the village the façade is imposing, indicating its status as the manor house at which courts were held until the War Department took over the manor in 1915. The front elevation retains its symmetry but has had some unsympathetic alterations, including reroofing in modern interlocking tiles. There are UPVC sashes in recessed window openings, and a later mono-pitched glazed porch between the ground floor windows. The house is well set back from the public road and barely visible behind trees. The adjacent cottage is believed to be 19th century in date but much altered, built to provide accommodation for farm workers (*Fig. 26*). The cottage has been renovated and has a weatherboarded exterior in keeping with the vernacular traditions of the village, with a more recent clay interlocking tiled roof and some plastic windows. The side elevation of the cottage is visible through trees from the main road. The definitive map of Essex shows a public footpath passing along the driveway past these buildings but this is not signposted or maintained.



Fig. 25 Old Hall.



Fig. 26 Old Hall Farm Cottage.

7.22 The agricultural outbuilding on the driveway is a prominent feature in the streetscape from the public road and from the village green, and is also clearly visible when viewed from the approach road into the village from the west (*Fig. 27*). The main range is a high single storey structure with a slack corrugated iron pitched roof and full height plank doors, and two large windows with vertical glazing bars and transoms. There is a flat roofed low single storey extension, part of which has been converted for use as a bus shelter. It is in a poor state of repair, with patchy white render, and joinery in need of repair and a coat of paint. A water tower once stood behind this building.



Fig. 27 Agricultural outbuilding.

- 7.23 Adjacent to the listed George and Dragon pub is a long single storey brick built outbuilding with a pitched slate roof which occupies a prominent position where the view opens up at the road junction (*Fig. 28*). This building is used as the village stores and post office, facing onto the car park with a long canopy providing protection for goods on display outside. This has what might be described as a modest 'frontier trading post' appearance which is appropriate in this remote location and is relatively unobtrusive and unspoilt by advertising.



Fig. 28 Village shop adjacent to the George and Dragon.

- 7.24 A semi-detached pair of weatherboarded cottages, nos 1-2 Churchend, now barely visible behind trees and scrub, formed part of the 1920s redevelopment. The appearance of these cottages reinforces the distinctive local architecture of the village with their white and black weatherboard elevations and simple design. The positioning also reflects a more historic feature of the settlement. They were built on the site of a single-storey cottage that housed the island's Government agent, which was said to be of Dutch origin. This would have been one of a number of buildings on the island that exhibited the influence of Dutch settlers in the 17th century, and may have been the house referred to in the RCHME inventory of 1923¹³.
- 7.25 Adjacent to Kents Cottages is a pair of semi-detached two-storey black weatherboard cottages at nos 7-8 Churchend, understood to be part of the 1920s redevelopment (*Fig. 29*). These cottages have a hipped roof of plain clay tiles with a central brick chimney. The windows are flush to the front and are of a modern glazing pattern. Although the front elevation is rather blank, with its simple glazing pattern and lack of elevational detail, these cottages provide a pleasing visual contrast with the adjacent white terrace and the brick cottages to the north.



Fig. 29 Nos 7-8 Churchend.

- 7.26 Near the site of the old windmill is a single storey cottage, no. 4a Churchend, predominantly finished in black weatherboard but with rendered gables with applied false timbers and white bargeboards, and clay tiled roof (*Fig. 30*). It is a distinctive and atypical building in the streetscape, but its large open plot and quirky appearance adds interest to the scene. Although essentially 20th century in appearance, its original date of construction is unclear, and it is believed to have developed from an older cottage possibly associated with the old windmill nearby. An old timber shed in the grounds of the cottage is thought to be one of the mill's outbuildings.

¹³ RCHME *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex* Vol. IV, 47



Fig. 30 No. 4a Churchend.

7.27 Amongst the 1920s redevelopment are brick semi-detached and detached cottages, numbers 15 to 18 Churchend, built to the north of Kents Cottages to provide homes for the district nurse and policeman (*Fig. 31*). These two storey buildings are constructed of pale stock brick, laid in stretcher bond indicating modern cavity wall construction, with hipped slate roofs. They mostly have eight over eight sliding sash windows and where original doors have survived they are part-glazed timber construction with small panes reflecting the window glazing. The doors typically have flat canopies on moulded brackets. No.19 Churchend is a detached property of this design but with a single storey side extension with a pitched roof of a corrugated material, full height boarded doors

and small paned casement windows (*Fig. 32*). This was formerly the blacksmith's cottage with adjacent workshop.



Fig. 31 No.15 Churchend.



Fig. 32 No. 19 Churchend, former blacksmith's cottage and workshop.

- 7.28 At the southern extremity of the village are numbers 20 to 32 Churchend, cottages constructed during the 1920s redevelopment which are typically two storey semi-detached white weatherboarded cottages, painted black to the side elevations (although there is one single storey property) (*Fig. 33*). They have hipped slate roofs to the east side of the road, and hipped clay tiled roofs to the west, with central chimneys. Those on the west side have been re-roofed with uncambered machine-made tiles which give a flat, uniform appearance, lacking the texture of older handmade clay tiles. Entrances are to the side with shallow mono-pitched porches that were historically roofed with weatherboard, with the lower portions boarded and solid doors. There is now some variety in the form of these porches, some having been closed in, but they are still typically mono-pitched, small and discrete. There is a consistent pattern of fenestration that provides cohesion to the group, with side casements and a central plain window with top vent. Historic photos show small paned casements on some of these properties, suggesting these are later replacements. At least one original outbuilding survives in this group, at no. 28 Churchend, probably a privy, with a weatherboarded exterior and handmade clay tiles (*Fig. 34*). This should be retained as these outbuildings generally seem to have been lost. Care needs to be taken that incremental changes to boundary treatments, as well as introduction of garages, hardstanding and other outbuildings in the large plots do not undermine the cohesion of the group and the rural character of the village.



Fig. 33 Nos 22-23 Churchend.



Fig. 34 Outbuilding, no. 8 Churchend.

7.29 On the west side of the spinal road there is a historic K6 telephone box adjacent other street furniture relating to various utilities (*Fig. 35*).



Fig. 35 K6 telephone kiosk.

7.30 A more distinctive building that formed part of the 1920s building programme is a long single storey structure at right angles to the road (*Fig. 36*), of yellow local stock brick with shallow brick buttresses to the sides elevations and corners, full height plank doors to the side, a pitched corrugated roof with small pendant finials at the gable ends and a round window at the gable. This building is what remains of a maintenance yard built for the Royal Engineers, and included an office, carpenters' yard and builders' yard. It is now used by QinetiQ as an estate office. Its brickwork clearly associates it with the domestic dwellings built to the south at the same time, and therefore it forms part of a distinctive group that contributes to the local character of the village.



Fig. 36 QinetiQ estate office.

- 7.31 Churchfield Cottages are of 1920s or later construction, with yellow stock brick in stretcher bond and pitched roofs of modern machine-made plain tiles or pantiles (*Fig. 37*). The windows are UPVC with a horizontal emphasis in a simple glazing pattern with plain side-hung casements with top vents. Some have recessed glazed UPVC doors with side lights, or there are side entrances under mono-pitched tiled porches. Although modern in appearance, the use of yellow brick and the scale and simplicity of design of these properties suits the area well, and the generous gardens contribute to the spacious character of the area. Nos 1-2 Churchfield Cottages has a summer roosting population of long-eared bats which is a consideration when undertaking repairs to the building.



Fig. 37 Churchfield Cottages.

7.32 To the rear of Churchfield Cottages and accessed by a track from the road are a pair of semi-detached white rendered single storey properties, built during WWII to provide accommodation for workers at a top secret military installation, the remains of which lie in fields just outside the conservation area (*Fig. 38*). These properties have been much altered with modern interlocking tiled roofs and replacement windows and doors, and have a rather untidy boundary. Although a track passes in front of the cottages around the field edge, they are barely visible from the public road or public footpaths and can only be glimpsed from the village green, so they do not directly contribute to the street scene. However these distinctive properties are a reminder that this

quiet rural village owes much to the military operations across the island.



Fig. 38 Second World War cottages.

7.33 Of the main farm complex at Old Hall Farm little remains of what appears on historic maps as a three-sided courtyard arrangement. However one long single storey brick range has survived, now dominated by large modern agricultural sheds (*Fig. 39*). The fabric of this building includes early soft red brick perhaps of 18th century date as well as the local yellow stock brick introduced in the mid-19th century. The building has a corrugated roof, with raised parapets at the gable ends and full height boarded doors. This structure is a valuable element in the streetscape both in its use of local materials (there is only a limited survival of early local red brick) and also as a reminder of the continuity of

historic farming that has been an important feature of the settlement for centuries.



Fig. 39 Early range at Old Hall Farm.

- 7.34 Tucked behind the bus shelter is a scrubby mound with grand but overgrown steps rising to its summit, where there is an iron pillar gauge (*Fig. 40*). This is what remains of waterworks believed to date from around 1886, which included a pumping plant and associated water tower¹⁴. The introduction of a fresh water supply to the island was an important feature of the Victorian improvements that provided a regular local supply of fresh water. The grandeur of this feature is indicative of the importance of the development to the welfare of the islanders, but it is now in a state of romantic decay. It would be a pity to see this feature lost to encroaching scrub and neglect.



Fig. 40 Steps to waterworks.

Contribution of greenery and green spaces

- 7.35 The conservation area is green and spacious, as can be seen from an aerial photo of the village (*Fig. 42*). In addition to the contribution of the surrounding landscape setting, trees, open green spaces and gardens make an essential contribution to the special character throughout the conservation area. Domestic gardens are important, with properties typically set in large plots with gardens that are often well planted, aided by the excellent quality of the soil. Hedges often form the front boundaries of properties, enhancing the green and rural character of the village. The village green is an expansive green open space at the heart of the community which is a valuable amenity area. There is also an enclosed grassed play area to the south of the village that provides a safe environment for children. The churchyard provides further extensive green space within the conservation area which has been extended westwards in recent years.

¹⁴ See Dalton, 'Wells on Fowlness Island, Ancient and Modern', *The Essex Naturalist*, vol. xv, 1907-8



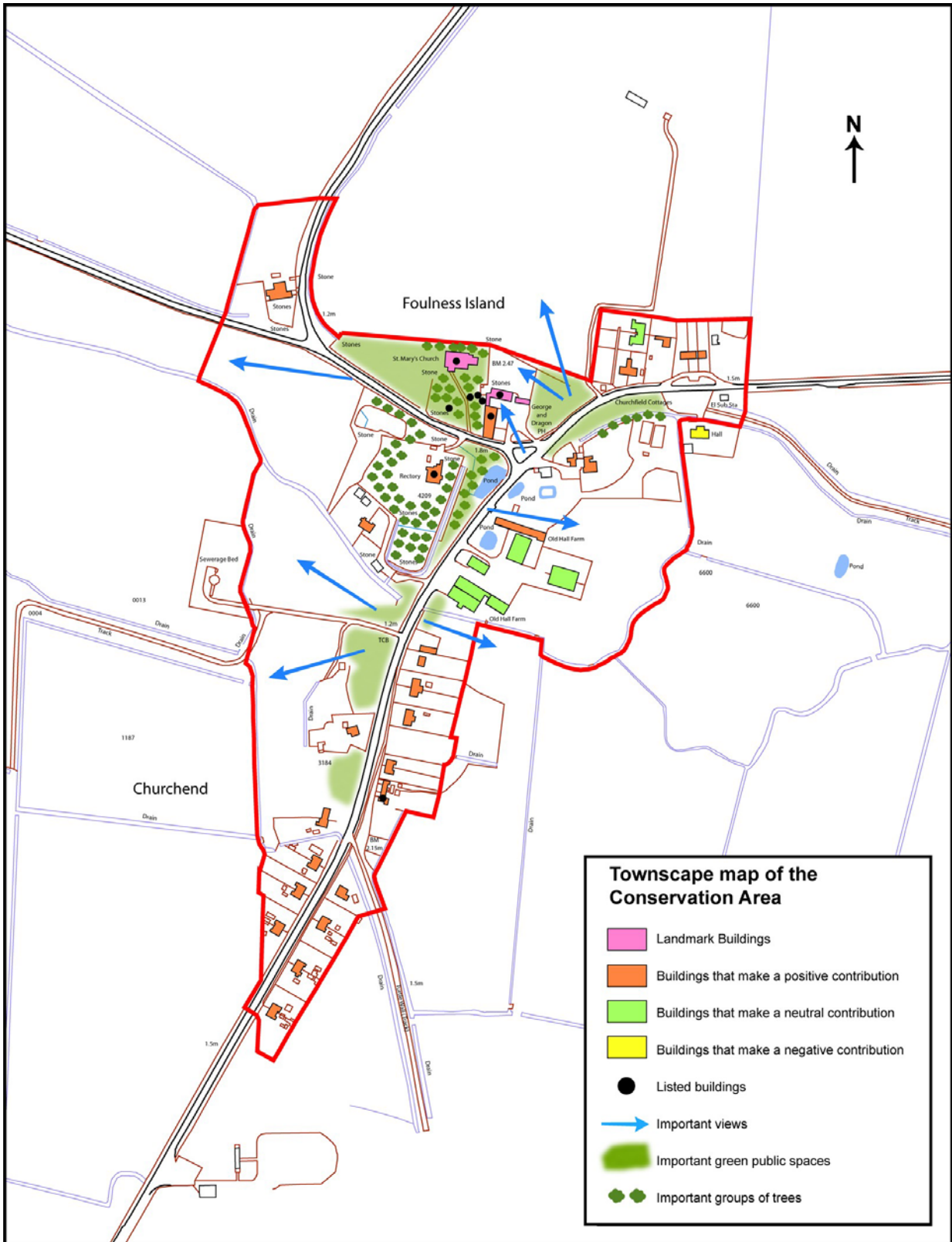
Fig. 41 Recent extension to burial ground looking towards old churchyard.

- 7.36 Generally mature trees and groups of trees are rare on the island, but in the conservation area trees figure prominently providing added landscape value. The map (*Fig. 43*) attempts to note the contribution of key groups of trees, although trees and tall scrub are characteristic throughout the area. The grounds around the rectory are well wooded. Trees encroach on the green verge along the spinal road opposite the farm, almost obscuring the white weatherboarded cottages at nos 1 and 2 Churchend. There are mature trees in the historic portion of the churchyard, and also along the route of the old byway where it curves eastwards opposite the village green, possibly associated with the former grounds of the Old Hall. There are also trees to the north of the farm which contribute to the street scene around the road junction. The verges are often planted with trees, to the credit of past planting schemes by the MoD.
- 7.37 There are wide green verges often planted with trees, as along the route of the old byway where the road turns east. These verges are an important feature that contributes to the spacious and verdant character of the area. In places the verges merge into the green or agricultural open space of the surrounding landscape, notably opposite nos 15-18 Churchend. Here the grassy open space is crossed by historic ditches, like the 'Stinking Ditch' (so named because the outflow from the modern flush toilets in the new 1920s brick houses went into it)¹⁵. The area also encompasses the site of what were once known as the Round Gardens. There is no evidence of this feature today, the earthwork features having been ploughed out relatively recently, but the gardens are shown on old OS maps and are still remembered within the community. More research is needed to understand the significance of these historic features.

¹⁵ See Dobson, pp 24-5



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Fig. 42 Aerial photograph of conservation area.



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Fig. 43 Townscape analysis map of conservation area.

Problems and Pressures

Maintenance

7.38 In the main properties appear to be in a reasonable state of repair and well maintained, but there are some exceptions. These include the agricultural outbuilding near the Old Hall, which is a prominent feature in the streetscape, and perhaps suffers from a lack of useful purpose (apart from as a bus shelter!). The patchy render and rotten joinery create a neglected appearance that detracts from the street scene. The rear elevation of the George and Dragon, which is clearly visible from the village green is also a little neglected. The village hall, although excluded from the conservation area, is highly visible from the public highway and its run-down state intrudes on the character of the area (*Fig. 44*). The building is a late 1960s low rectangular structure with a flat roof, and a lower flat roofed front extension with a glazed entrance and a horizontal arrangement of windows at a high level. It is rendered in part with timber cladding, and the timber joinery of the windows and doors is in a poor state. The surrounding plot opens directly onto the gravel parking area to the front and is unkempt and overgrown.



Fig. 44 Village Hall.

Loss of original features

7.39 In the past repairs and upgrades of properties have resulted in loss of original features and some unsympathetic alterations, particularly with regard to replacement windows (*Fig. 45*). Historic fenestration makes an important contribution to the character of individual buildings and to the overall character and appearance of the conservation area. Other examples of inappropriate modernisation include replacement of historic doors and roofing materials.



Fig. 45 Replacement UPVC windows, no. 17 Churchend.

Street clutter

7.40 Generally the public realm is well maintained, and is tidy, rubbish-free and unvandalised. However the street scene is marred by a proliferation of street signs, street furniture and road markings, much of which derives from rather heavy-handed traffic management. This creates a cluttered appearance that detracts from the unspoilt rural character of the village. This is particularly evident around the road junction opposite the village green (*Fig. 47*). As well as the high level of clutter, the design of the street signs and furniture fails to take into account the historic character of the setting. Street lighting is out of scale with the village context. The low metal crash barrier where the road turns eastwards is a particularly poor example that fails to respect the character of the area (*Fig. 46*). A low modern wall of bright red hard brick at the edge of the pedestrian footpath is also an overly harsh feature.

Recycling bins in the gravel carpark at the front of the village hall are unsightly but perhaps unavoidable, although they could be shielded from view.



Fig. 46 Crash barrier.



Fig. 47 Street clutter around road junction.

Access

7.41 Access onto the island is severely restricted and controlled by QinetiQ on behalf of the MoD. The island is a site of great historical and landscape interest, and is an internationally important nature conservation site. It is crossed by many public rights of way but additional byelaw controls mean that these are not always accessible to the public and some are no longer maintained. The restrictions on access and movement around the island mean that these valuable assets cannot be fully enjoyed by the wider public. Visitors to the island can boost the local economy, but business at the George and Dragon pub is an example of a local business that has suffered from these restrictions. There are signs that QinetiQ are relaxing restrictions, with an increase in the number of open days and public events, as well as monthly access to the heritage centre.

Population

7.42 There is a long term question of the future of the community on the island, as the population is declining and is currently at its lowest for well over 200 years. Community facilities are gradually being lost, with the closure of the school and gradual loss of pubs and shops. This has led to some pressure for change of use, which has so far been achieved sympathetically as in the case of the school which has been successfully adapted for use as a heritage centre. This heritage centre has become a valuable resource for the community and a means of preserving the collective memory of the dwindling population of islanders, as well as attracting visitors. Attendance at church services has declined to around 10, creating uncertainty for the future use of the church. The small size of the population and restricted access onto the island has some benefits, including reducing traffic and avoiding pressure for new development, but further loss of community could result in empty properties and poor maintenance. Equally any increase in the population would result in greater pressure for development and new facilities.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Street scene and amenity space¹⁶

- 8.1 Soft verges are a characteristic feature of the village and should be retained (*Fig. 48*). The use of hard edges and kerbs should generally be avoided. Rough demarcation of pedestrian footpaths and carriageways enhances the rural character of the village (*Fig. 49*).



Fig. 48 Soft verges along spinal road.

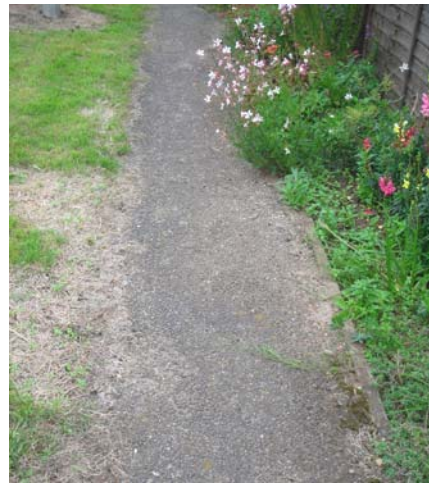


Fig. 49 Roughly edged footpath.

- 8.2 Surface treatments and dressings should be appropriate to the rural character of the conservation area. Most of the historic tracks in the conservation area are grassed over or of old compacted gravel. Bound gravel or pea shingle are suitable dressings in rural settings. As a point of interest, John Dobson, a long standing former resident of the island, recalled that historically crushed cockle shells featured on well maintained paths around the village, the shells deriving from the shell banks on the eastern coast of the island¹⁷.
- 8.3 Street clutter currently detracts from the visual attractiveness of the village, particularly around the historic core, and should be reviewed and rationalised. Any surplus or excessive elements should be removed, particularly around the main road junction. Consideration should be given to the design of signage and street furniture in terms of materials, size and form so that it is sensitive to the unspoilt rural context of the village. Accepting that Foulness is a functional military establishment, the designs do not need to be overly heritage based. The designs should be co-ordinated and consistent as far as possible, for example with similar coloured poles, a dark receding colour being preferable. Where safety is a concern, as at the road bend where the crash barrier has been installed, solutions should be sought that are sympathetic to the context. Road markings should be used

¹⁶ English Heritage provides regional guidance on management of streetscapes in historic areas. See *Streets for All: East of England*, 2005.

¹⁷ Dobson, 1996, 24

sparingly within the historically sensitive village environment whilst maintaining safety standards, and existing markings should be reviewed with a view to future simplification. As a general principle, a minimalist approach to traffic management is recommended.

- 8.4 The village green is a valuable amenity space not only for Churchend but also providing a community focal point for the whole island. At present this space is not well defined, and is barely distinguishable as a community space. A few benches of an appropriate design for the rural setting would add to the amenity value of the green, and perhaps tidying of the scrub and better definition at the boundary. Somewhat in contradiction to earlier comments about signage a suitably designed village sign drawing on local history and character would not be out of place here.
- 8.5 Green spaces and trees are an important element in the street scene. These must be properly maintained to preserve their attractive appearance and avoid the encroachment of scrub, as well as to protect views within the conservation area and views out and in. There is some anecdotal evidence that scrub has grown up in recent years, with views to the rectory for example more obscured than they once were. An old pond, which is a historic feature now cut through by the spinal road near the road junction, has become overgrown. A maintenance programme is required to ensure the effective management of these green spaces and important landscape features. Tall Leylandii hedges are also alien features in the landscape. Native species would be more appropriate for the conservation area.

Property Maintenance

- 8.6 In the past property repair and maintenance within the conservation area has involved the loss of historic fabric and features. Listed buildings are the subject of quinquennial reviews, and plans are underway for these to include not only a condition report on the buildings but also a plan for any works required. However unlisted buildings also contribute to the character of the conservation area, including historic and more recent 20th century buildings. A repair and maintenance programme should be in place that takes into account the particular features of properties that contribute to the special character of the conservation area. This should also include provision for enhancing the area by reinstatement of features where they have been lost, for example in the case of traditional fenestration and doors. Unauthorised alterations such as changes to windows and doors and exterior painting are not permitted under the terms of tenancy agreements, and can therefore be managed by Defence Estates to ensure the special character of the built environment is preserved and enhanced. Boundary treatments must also be a feature of the plan, with proper maintenance of historic walls which are an important element in the conservation area.
- 8.7 At present tenants are free to choose their front boundary treatments. Use of traditional boundaries like picket fences, post and rail fences and hedges should be encouraged. The treatment of rear boundaries should also be considered as significant where they are viewed from public footpaths.

- 8.8 Properties that appear neglected detract from the attractive visual character of the conservation area. The village hall is an eyesore that is desperately in need of either repair with tidying and landscaping of the plot, or demolition to be replaced by something appropriately designed. As the building is adjacent to the conservation area, any new building would have to conform to strict design criteria in accordance with policy BC1 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan. The treatment of the plot should respect the old byway that leads eastwards away from it. The agricultural outbuilding near the Old Hall requires basic repair and maintenance of the exterior which would reduce the negative impact that the building has in the streetscape. Ideally a new use should be sought that would not involve unsympathetic alteration.
- 8.9 The site of the water pump is also neglected at present. This is a distinctive local feature with an important place in the history of the island, but is in danger of being forgotten and engulfed by scrub. Some basic clearing of vegetation should be undertaken to prevent loss and damage to this feature.

Future Development

- 8.10 At present there is little pressure for new development in the conservation area. Any new development would need to take account of the special character of the area in terms of its materials, design and scale, in accordance with policies BC1-2 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan. Generous plots with gardens are characteristic of the conservation area and development within garden spaces should be avoided. However there is a vacant plot between numbers 18 and 7 Churchend which could accommodate a new property. It is essential that any significant new development respects the historic ditches and trackways that are intrinsic to the local distinctiveness of the conservation area.

Historic Environment Management

- 8.11 The wider landscape of the island is of great importance historically and archaeologically, as well as for its natural landscape value and ecology. The conservation area incorporates features that contribute to the overall landscape significance of Foulness, including ditches, tracks, ponds and earthworks. In addition to these ancient features, the widespread surviving evidence of past military activity on the island constitutes a rich military heritage.
- 8.12 Defence Estates are currently preparing an integrated Rural Management Plan for Foulness that will provide a strategy for managing the complex elements of the landscape both natural and man-made. This appraisal will be used to inform any plans affecting the conservation area.
- 8.13 The Shoeburyness Conservation Group is a partnership of organisations including the Foulness and Conservation Archaeological Society and the parish council, who set out to safeguard the historic and environmental assets of the island, and which can be instrumental in ensuring that any developments within the conservation area take account of its special character. At present the membership of the group has a

strong emphasis on the natural environment, and it is suggested that representation from the historic and archaeological environment is increased.

- 8.14 English Heritage are shortly to publish a report based on a desk-based survey of the heritage assets of Foulness as a whole. This will be a valuable tool both for Defence Estates management of the historic environment and for re-evaluating heritage protection across the island.

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Appendix 1 Listed Buildings in Conservation Area

TR 09 SW	FOULNESS	CHURCH END
9/98		Church of St. Mary the Virgin, St. Thomas and All Saints
GV		II

Parish Church. Circa 1853. William Hambley. On the site of a Chapel re-established by Lady Joan de Bohun 1386 and a later timber framed church. Kentish ragstone. Stone dressings. 3 steeply pitched grey slate roofs, gabled to east and west. South tower with porch. Chancel, nave and aisles and north vestry. Early English style. Buttresses to all angles and between windows. East face 1:1:1 windows chamfered 2-centred heads. Labels with real and stylised heads to all nave windows. Chancel window of 3 graduated lights, there is also a similar window high up in the north aisle wall. Plinth. Bench mark to southern buttress. Cross to Chancel apex. South face. 1:3:2 similar windows and labels, plinth carries through. The south tower with finial to octagonal shingle spire is hipped at the base. Tower of 3 orders, angle buttresses to 2 stages, corbel table to belfry which has angle pilasters and lancet sounding louvres to each face. Second stage, quatrefoiled roundels to east and west faces, band below. Curved triangular recess with circular window to south face, band below. Chamfered 2-centred arch to doorway, moulded label with King and Queen stops, vertically boarded door with ornate hinges. Original iron lantern over doorway. Small lancet windows to side walls. West face. 1:1:1 similar windows with labels, that to Nave of 2 lights with quatrefoil over, pointed elliptical window to apex, band and plinth carried through, stone parapet verges. North face 1:0:4 similar windows, north doorway, 2-centred head, chamfered of 2 orders, label with king and queen head stops, pediment over, vertically boarded door, 2 ornate strap hinges. North vestry doorway Caernarvon head, vertically boarded door. Interior. South doorway, simple chamfered 2-centred arch, vertically boarded door, ornate strap hinges. Aisles, roofs, side purlin ridge board construction, intermittent collars and ashlar posts. Nave and chancel roofs, double side purlins, ridge boards and ashlar post, intermittent collars, wall posts on corbels, stop chamfered pincipals, moulded wall plates. Stone flag floors throughout excepting coloured tiles to Sanctuary. Chancel, C19 stained glass to north and south windows. Wooden panelled reredos, side panels with wheat and vine motifs, 4 Evangelists to centre panels in poker work. Square head to north vestry doorway. Moulded wooden altar rails. Simple 2 centred Chancel arch. North and south arcades of 5 bays, moulded capitals and bases to alternate round and octagonal columns and responds. Octagonal panelled pulpit, moulded cornice and soffit, braces to soffit, chamfered balusters to steps. Painted organ case with trefoiled roundels, a plaque states the organ won a gold medal 1866 at an exhibition, it was purchased from North Ockendon, Essex, Church 10 March 1908. Wooden eagle lectern 1930. Wall memorial to Rt. Hon. George Henry Finch, Earl of Winchelsea, MP for Rutland for 40 years, May 1907. Panelled box pews, complete with gates. Simple round bowl to font, octagonal soffit and stem, moulded base, carved wooden lid. Bequest board, Rev. Thos. Ellwood, 1815, bequeathed the interest of £100 twice a year to the poor. Trinity House donated money for the building of this Church with the provision that the steeple be high enough to act as a landmark for navigation. Pevsner, Essex 1976.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/99

Headstone approx. 33 metres south of south door, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, St. Thomas and All Saints

GV

II

Headstone. 1769. Stone. Mary Thornbarrow. Scrolled sides and curved head. Central cherub head, left hour glass and right scythe.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/100

Headstone approx. 36 metres south east of south door, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, St. Thomas and All Saints

GV

II

Headstone. 1738. Stone. Richard Archer, scrolled sides, curved head, central scallop shell, flowers and swags to sides, central book, and sword.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/101

Headstone west side of path approx. 35 metres south east of south door, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, St. Thomas and All Saints

GV

II

Headstone. 1698. Stone. Jonas Allen. Straight sides, curved and raised head with central skull and crossbones, simple inscription, here lieth the body of Jonas Allen 27 April 1698.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/102

Group of 3 headstones approx. 35 metres south east of south door and east of path, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, St. Thomas and All Saints

GV

II

Group of 3 headstones. Stone. Thomas Wiggins 1811, James Nott June 1721 and Francis Borrow 1734, all with curved and raised heads, that of James Nott with foliate scrolls, cherub and trumpets, of Francis Borrow with central crown, 2 cherubs with trumpets and skull and cross bones. There is a body and foot stone attached to Thos. Wiggins headstone.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/103

The Rectory

-

II

House. Late C17/early C18 origin with brick facing scratch dated SP 1846. Gault brick. Hipped grey slate roof. 2 storeys. Rear chimney stack. Moulded eaves cornice. 3 window range of small paned vertically sliding sashes, gauged brick arches, tall ground floor windows to front and left return. Central enclosed flat headed porch, stone band and cornice, tall window to front, part glazed door to left return. Until this century the Island had no fresh water supply and the water cistern supplied from the roof, is to the rear of the building. Interior features include, kitchen dresser with shelves and drawers. Servants stairs from kitchen. Small cellar. 4-panel doors with moulded surrounds throughout. Stick baluster staircase with wreathed handrail and landing rails. Moulded cornices to main rooms. Shutters to some windows and panels below others, now with cills but probably for vertical shutters. Moulded wainscots. Shutters to glazed front door. Some original bedroom cupboards. Black marble fire surround. Stop chamfered bridging joist in old kitchen. Fireplace with iron range "The Larbert" Renfrew, Scotland, documents have been found relating to the shipping of 280 per month of these ranges from Scotland to the south of England. To the side of the range is a bread oven with a water cistern under. The 4 board door with moulded surround and small canopy on brackets has an original wooden box lock with iron bands to right and left, each ornamented with cut-out quatrefoils.

SCHEDULE 2

In the entry for:

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

The Rectory

The address shall be amended to read:

9/103

CHURCH END

The Old Rectory

TR 09 SW	FOULNESS	CHURCH END
9/104		Nos. 10-14 inclusive, Kents Cottages
-		II

Row of mid C19 cottages with No. 14 added a little later as a crosswing. Timber framed and weatherboarded. Grey slate roofs, red ridge tiles, barge boards, finial and pendant to gable of No. 14. 3 plastered brick chimney stacks. 4:1 small paned vertically sliding sash windows. 4 vertically boarded doors, small porches with slanting roofs, rear return porch to No. 14. Internally the cottages are mainly unaltered, with very steep and narrow stairs to the 2 upper rooms and angled fireplaces. The tiny original kitchen range in No. 12 is intact. Vertically boarded doors with original ironmongery.

TQ 99 SE	FOULNESS	CHURCH END/ FOULNESS ROAD
8/105		Priestwood Farmhouse
-		II

House. C17 or earlier with later alterations and additions. Wills of C16 show that a dwelling existed here C15. Timber framed and weatherboarded. Red plain tiled roofs of 2 levels, hipped and outshot lower right range. Rear right gambrel roof range and left range. External left and rear right chimney stacks. 2 storeys, one storey and attics rear gambrel roof range. 2:2 window range of 3 light casements, pentice boards over. Octagonal window to first floor above porch. Gabled porch to right of left range, C20 door.

TR 09 SW	FOULNESS	CHURCH END/ FOULNESS ROAD
9/106		Rugwood Farmhouse
-		II

House. Early, mid C18 with later rear wings built within 50 years of original build. Timber framed and weatherboarded. Red plain tiled roof. 3 gabled rear ranges. External red brick chimney stacks to right and left. 2 storeys. 3 window range of small paned vertically sliding sashes, pentice boards over. Central 4 panel 2-light door, moulded surround, flat canopy on brackets. Internal features include stick balusters to staircase, 4-panelled doors with moulded surrounds.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/96

The George and Dragon
Public House

GV

II

Originally 3 early C17 cottages converted into a Public House late C17 with later alterations and additions. Timber framed and weatherboarded. Hipped grey slate roof, red ridge tiles. Left plastered brick, off centre right red brick chimney stacks. 2 storeys, single storey left return lean-to. 6 window range of small paned vertically sliding sashes, pentice boards over. Off centre left C20 porch and door. Single storey forward left extension of similar materials.

TR 09 SW

FOULNESS

CHURCH END

9/97

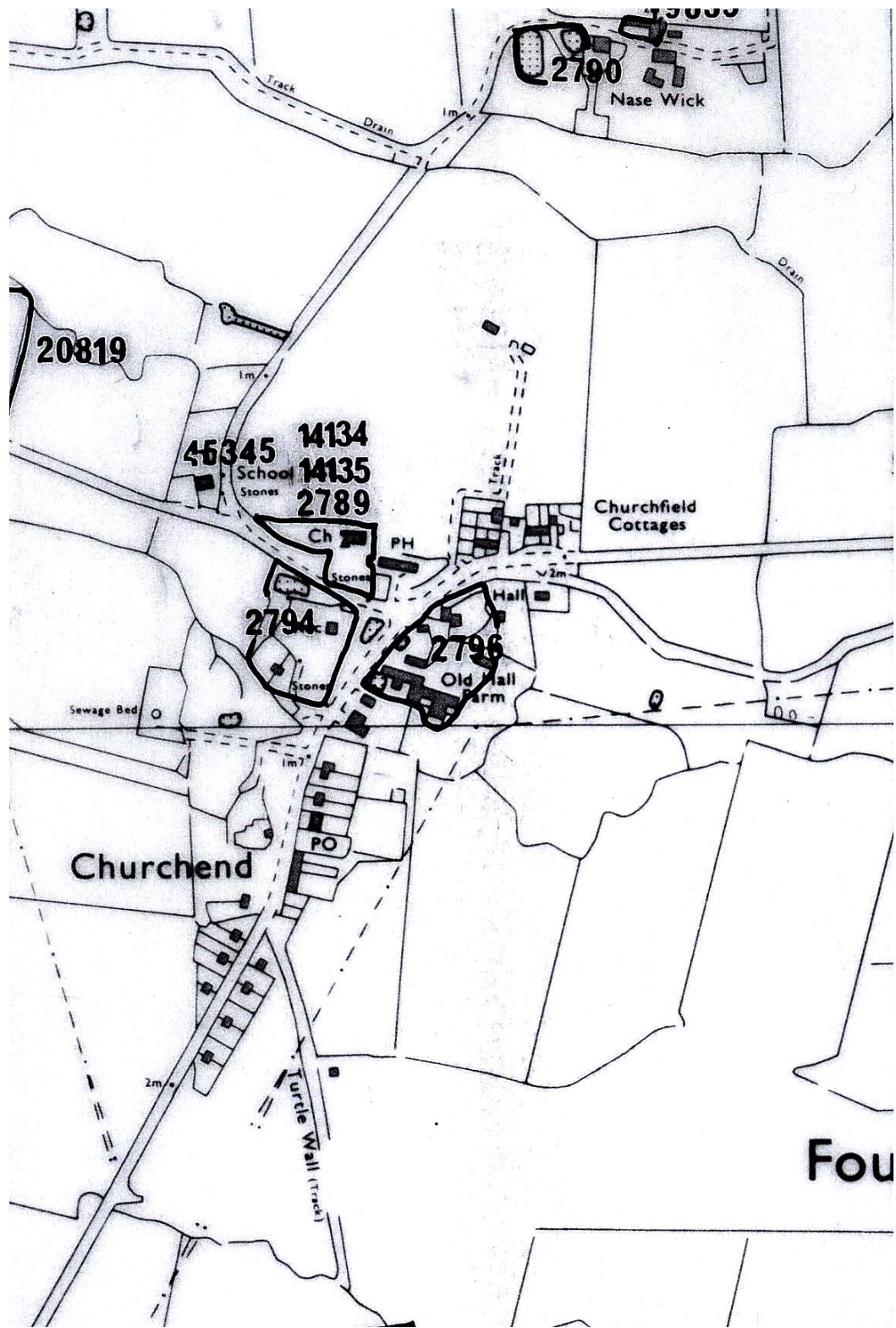
Walled garden to south
of The George and
Dragon Public House and
adjacent to the
Churchyard

GV

II

Walled garden. C18. Vari-coloured local brick, the west wall adjacent to Churchyard approx. 3 metres tall, the other walls approximately 1.3 metres tall. Although now a walled garden, it is recorded that during the 1790's the then Licensee of The George and Dragon Amelia Bennewith promoted bare fist fights within the walls, thus the Churchyard wall was higher to keep the fights from view of the Church. These fights continued until mid C19. Information from R.W. Crump. Chairman AWRE (Foulness) Archaeological Society, October 1986.

Appendix 2 EHER Sites in Conservation Area



County District ROC Site No. 2794

Parish civil Foulness

NGR TR 003931 Old Map No. TR09-005

Period-general undetermined Site type-general

Description

Earthworks. {1}

Site and Artefact Types

Site type earthwork Form earthwork
Period-specific undetermined Material -

Sources:

1 Desc text Location ECC
Collection SMR
Author Hunter, J Date -

Date of compilation or update: Brown, NR Date 11:1983

County District ROC Site No. 2796

Parish civil Foulness

NGR TR 005931 Old Map No. TR09-007

Period-general medieval Site type-general

Description

Moat. {1}

One of several sites on sketch plan on back MSRG card. {2}

Site and Artefact Types

Site type moat Form earthwork
Period-specific medieval Material -

Sources:

1 Desc text Location ECC
Collection SMR
Author Hunter, J Date -

2 Plan-sketch Location ECC
Collection MSRG TR09-002

Date of compilation or update: Brown, NR Date 11:1983

County Essex District ROC Site No. 14134

Parish civil Foulness

NGR TR00409320

Old Map No. TR09SW

Cross Reference 2789 14135

Period-general medieval Site type-general

Site Name Chapel on the site of St marys Church, Foulness

Description

A chapel was first erected on the site in 1386 by Lady Joan de Bohun, Countess of Essex, for the benefit of the small number of inhabitants of the island. There was no endowment, and the chaplain rarely visited, so Ldy Joan founded a chantry in 1408, so that the priest could perform all offices for the inhabitants. AN exact location for the chapel is unknown but it was somewhere within the confines of the present churchyard, as in 1545 it was demolished when the chantry was dissolved. A new timber-framed church was erected on the site. {1} {2}

Site and Artefact Types

Site type chapel Form documentary
Period-specific 1386 Material -

Land classification

On site Churchyard - Date 1994

Sources:

1 Desc text Location ECC
Collection ERO
Author Smith, JR Date 1970
Foulness

2 Desc text Location ECC
Collection ERO
Author Benton, P Date 1867
The history of the Rochford Hundred Vol.I

Date of compilation or update: Gibson, S Date 1994

County Essex District ROC Site No. 14135

Parish civil Foulness

NGR TR00409320

Old Map No. TR09SW

Cross Reference 2789 14134

Period-general post medieval **Site type-general** church

Site Name Original church of ST. Mary, Foulness

Description

Built in c.1545, following the dissolution of the cemetery and the demolition of the earlier chapel. Little is known of the construction of the first church of St. Mary, except that it was timber built and had a spire with a vestry below it, in which there was a fireplace (the smoke escaping through a hole in the top of the spire. It was a small building, measuring 40ft. in length and 20ft. in width. Demolished in 1850 and replaced with the present church. {1}

Site and Artefact Types

Site type church

Form documentary

Period-specific c.1545

Material wood

Sources:

1 Desc text
Collection ERO
Author Smith, JR
Foulness

Location ECC

Date 1970

Date of compilation or update: Gibson, S

Date 1994



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