



EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

# RODING VALLEY

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# DISTRICT PLAN

STUDY REPORT 1980

SUPPLEMENT 4:

YORK HILL CONSERVATION AREA

YORK HILL

CONSERVATION AREA

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1. INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1. This Supplement has been published separately from the main Roding Valley District Plan Study Report, but forms background material to the preparation of the Roding Valley District Plan in the same way as the other research work outlined in the main report.
- 1.2. Four supplements have been published, each one dealing with a specific area, within the Plan area as a whole, where it is intended that proposals and policies will be shown at a smaller scale in the Draft Plan to be published in 1981. This supplement should, however, be read in conjunction with the main Study Report, since most of the issues referred to are analysed more thoroughly in the topic study chapters of that Report, and the various options and conclusions reached for the areas covered by the Supplements are only outlined in the main Report.

## Conservation Areas

- 1.3. Conservation Areas were first introduced under the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Under this act, local authorities were encouraged to determine which parts of their area were of specific architectural or historic interest, the character of which was worth preserving and enhancing, and to designate such areas as Conservation Areas. These provisions were later reenacted in the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act.
- 1.4. Prior to 1967, planning legislation had emphasised the conservation of individual buildings. Whilst the local authority could, under general planning powers, consider the effects of development proposals on the character of surrounding areas, no steps had been taken to give particular protection to areas of architectural or historic interest. Consequently, many important features were lost and the character of many areas changed completely because the local authority lacked the powers to resist such change.
- 1.5. The introduction of Conservation Area legislation therefore represented for the first time a formal recognition in law of the need to protect not only individual buildings, but also groups of buildings, the relationships of buildings to each other, the quality and character of the spaces between buildings and the relationship of buildings to their setting.
- 1.6. Conservation Areas may be centred on listed buildings, but are not always so, and they may include open spaces, trees, ancient monuments and other features of interest.
- 1.7. Since 1974 the protection given to Conservation Areas has been reinforced in two ways. Firstly anyone wishing to demolish a building in a Conservation Area (whether that building is listed or not) must apply for Listed Building consent. Secondly, anyone wishing to alter or cut down a tree in a Conservation Area, must give the local authority six weeks notice of their intentions, so that the authority may decide whether to make a Tree Preservation Order in selected cases, where the removal or alteration of such trees would erode the character of the area.
- 1.8. The designation of a Conservation Area is only a statement of intent and in preparing proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas, the local authority may wish to use other powers available to them, such as planning conditions, and the use of powers under the various highway acts.

## 2. Policies for Conservation Areas

- 2.1. Since 1974, the power to designate Conservation Areas has been the joint responsibility of the District and County Councils. Essex County Council, in addition to providing specialist advice on the protection of Conservation Areas, has made finance available for the preservation and maintenance of listed buildings and towards expenditure incurred in connection with Outstanding Conservation Areas of which there are two in Epping Forest District.
- 2.2. Present Essex County Council policy is detailed in the submitted County Structure Plan and seeks to ensure that within Conservation Areas, all these buildings, open spaces, trees, views and other aspects of the environment which go to make up the character of such places will be protected and enhanced.

- 2.3. In addition the Structure Plan sets out policies for the design, position, size, scale and the use of materials in new development proposals within Conservation Areas and specific reference is made to the particularly sensitive nature of timber framed buildings. The County Council has also produced a series of leaflets on different aspects of conservation, including one which gives guidance on Conservation Areas, their purpose, designation, and details of financial assistance that is available.
- 2.4. Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council have been very active in the designation and promotion of Conservation Areas. There are now a total of fourteen such areas within the District of which two, Chigwell Village, and York Hill are within the Roding Valley District Plan area. Epping Forest District Council has provided financial assistance towards buildings in both of these Conservation Areas.
- 2.5. In addition to the finance that is available from local authorities, assistance is sometimes given for particular aspects of conservation from other bodies such as the Civic Trust, the Historic Buildings Council for England and the Department of the Environment.
- 2.6. Although a general statement on Conservation Area policy was made by the District Council in its document 'Looking to the Future' published in 1977 the Council has not so far provided detailed guidance for the Conservation Areas as a whole, in respect of development control policies and policies for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. However, the preparation of the Roding Valley District Plan provides an opportunity to look in detail at the problems and possibilities of both Chigwell Village and York Hill Conservation areas, to produce land uses allocations and to provide firm guidance.

FIG 1



RODING VALLEY  
DISTRICT PLAN

YORK HILL  
CONSERVATION AREA

KEY

- Existing Boundary
- - - Possible Boundary Revision
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Other features of interest including walls, hedgerows and fences.
- ▨ Area Covered by Tree Preservation Order.
- Features detracting from Environmental quality including overhead wires, semi-derelict plots and signs.

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### **3.0 Features of the York Hill Conservation Area**

**3.1** The York Hill Conservation Area, the boundaries of which are shown on fig. 1, was designated by Epping Forest District Council after consultation with local organisations and Essex County Council, and came into effect in September, 1977.

**3.2** This area, to the north-west of Loughton town centre, borders on to Epping Forest and is almost entirely residential in use. The area contains an interesting mix of dwellings of various ages and styles, in an extremely pleasant setting of mature trees, hedgerows and narrow winding lanes.

**3.3** The Conservation Area contains 13 statutory Listed Buildings. At the top of York Hill across from The Gardeners Arms Public House and set back from a small green, stands a group of eighteenth-century buildings, some in red brick, contrasting with others of tarred weatherboarding. Other Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area include two seventeenth-century weatherboarded cottages in Woodbury Hollow, probably constructed at around about the same time as the first road was built through the Forest.

**3.4** Until the railway was constructed in the 1850's, Loughton was still very much a village in a wooded setting. The York Hill Conservation Area has such an appearance today. The environmental quality of the area derives not only from the merits of particular buildings, whether these buildings are listed or not, but from the overall quality of a number of features. The narrow lanes which run through the area are without pavements and are bounded in places by well-developed and maintained hedgerows. Mature trees are an important feature of the area and many of these are protected by two Tree Preservation Orders as fig. 1 indicates.

**3.5** These features, along with well cultivated gardens and fine views across Loughton and the forest, produce an environment of considerable charm that is rarely found in modern development. However, the blend of the natural and the man-made, which has evolved over hundreds of years, is subject to pressure for change. Unsympathetic development could so easily destroy the character of the area for ever.

### **4.0 Problems and Opportunities in the Conservation Area**

**4.1** The pressures that exist for development in the Roding Valley District Plan area are undoubtedly reinforced in the Conservation Area, and it is these pressures that cause the greatest problems. Without specific land use allocations and firm development control policies for the area, it could prove difficult to prevent undesirable development, or retain particular sites which add to quality of the environment, in their present form. The preparation of the Roding Valley District Plan therefore presents an opportunity to prepare such policies.

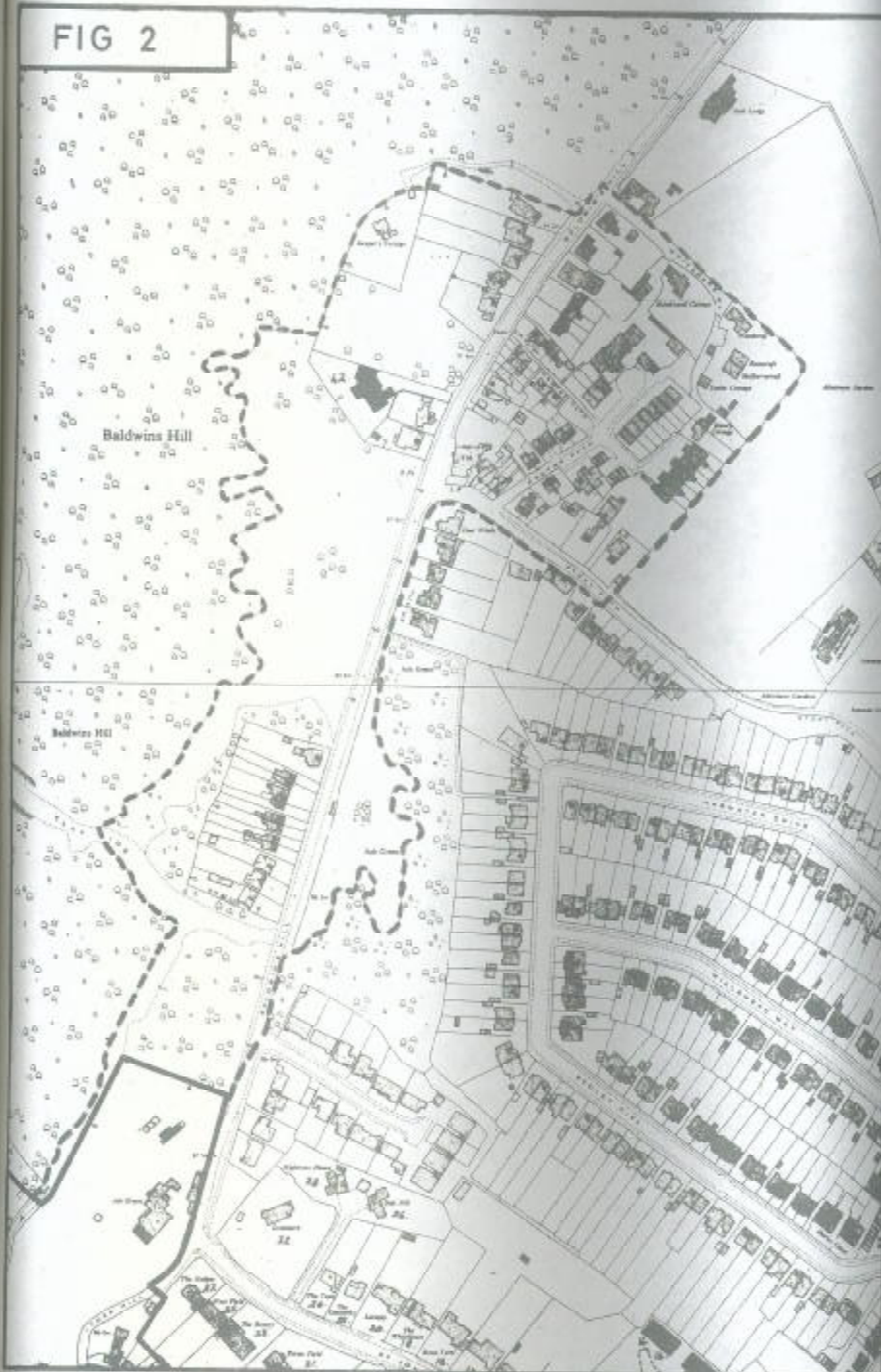
**4.2** Whilst buildings and trees within Conservation Areas are protected, other features, e.g. hedgerows, fences, walls, etc., which can be equally important, are not protected. Information could be given to property owners in the area, to stress the importance of both these features and of the Conservation Area as a whole and to give guidance where necessary on preservation and maintenance. Once lost, many features can never be replaced, and of course this is particularly true of mature trees and hedgerows.

- 4.3 Opportunities for financial assistance towards improvement of the area from the Local Authorities are likely to be limited in the immediate future. Any enhancement schemes which are undertaken will therefore have to rely on private and voluntary assistance, though financial aid may be forthcoming from bodies such as the Civic Trust and the Historic Buildings Council.
- 4.4 One other development pressure that could cause undesirable change is that of permitted development, i.e. small extensions to property, etc., which do not normally require planning permission. The District Council could conceivably use an Article 4 Direction under the 1977 General Development Order, to restrict certain developments which do not normally require planning permission to ensure that minor alterations were subject to control.
- 4.5 Where development was allowed, then stronger development control policies, providing guidance on design, use of materials, scale of building, colour, would help to ensure that that development was in keeping with and added to the existing character of the area.
- 4.6 Outside of these development pressures, there are few physical problems which detract from the quality of the area. Of those that are apparent, the one that is of most concern is that of the 'wirescape' at the top of York Hill, consisting of a number of G.P.O. lines, indicated on fig. 1. These do look unattractive and if the District Council were to investigate the possibility of putting the lines underground, then they would certainly receive the support of the County Council in doing so.
- Attention could also be given towards ensuring that other minor features, such as road signs, were made sympathetic with their environment.
- 4.7 It has been suggested that the boundaries of the Conservation Area could be amended to include the Baldwins Hill area as far as Bald Whittakers Way, as shown on fig. 2. Whilst this would include a few more statutory Listed Buildings, and some which would be worthy of listing, boundary amendments would have to include a large area of the forest, and a number of newer properties. This would effectively create a new Conservation Area, much of which would be of insufficient quality to merit such status.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 On the whole, the York Hill Conservation Area is of a high environmental standard throughout, needing little in the way of enhancement. Stronger development control policies could prevent undesirable development and ensure that new development is in sympathy with the environment. In addition, though Epping Forest District Council is unlikely to be able to provide finance for enhancement, it could publicise the Conservation Area, give guidance and encouragement to individuals and local organisations and co-ordinate the work of other organisations, such as the Department of the Environment, the Civic Trust and the County Council.

FIG 2



RODING VALLEY  
DISTRICT PLAN

YORK HILL  
CONSERVATION AREA

KEY

- Existing Boundary
- - - - - Possible Boundary Revision

SCALE 1:2500