

Heritage Statement: Church Lane Bridge (WFM/836)

Revision no: P02

Historical Railways Estate
WFM/836 Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries
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Executive summary

Church Lane Bridge (Historical Railways Estate (HRE) Ref: WFM/836) ('the bridge') (Asset 1) is located south of the village of Stow Maries in the county of Essex. The bridge is recorded on the Essex Historic Environment Records (HER) as the '*Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East*' (HER Number: 48655) and is therefore considered a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) within the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The bridge is not designated as a Listed Building and is not located within a Conservation Area or recorded by Maldon District Council as a locally listed building in Stow Maries. The bridge is considered to be a heritage asset of low overall heritage value which is consistent with its status as an NDHA.

The bridge carries an unclassified road, Church Lane, over the line of the former railway which is recorded on the Essex HER as '*Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line (Monument)*' (Asset 2) (HER number: 48628). The bridge is located adjacent to the former 'Stow Maries Halt' (Asset 3), a station dating to 1928, which now forms part of a nature reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust.

The bridge was constructed in c. 1888 for the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (also known as the 'Woodham Ferris & Maldon' line) which became part of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) and later the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The Woodham Ferrers to Maldon Railway branch line opened on 1st October 1889 and formed part of a link from London to Southend-on-Sea.

There are no Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas within the study area, and the closest designated heritage asset to the bridge is Mill Cottage a Grade II Listed Building (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) ref: 1306750) which is c. 85m from the bridge.

The supporting HRE engineering reports have assessed the structure as being in poor condition with multiple transverse fractures in the side arch barrels which extend through the spandrels and into the parapets above. The HRE's detailed design proposals to support the bridge and arrest any further deterioration consist of supporting the structure with a corrugated steel arch under the centre span and partly infilling around it with concrete. The central steel arch would allow access along the former railway line, which passes beneath the bridge, to be maintained, which is now the public right of way (PRoW).

The proposals would have a negligible effect on the course of the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line (Asset 2) and the 'Stow Maries Halt' (Asset 3). The potential magnitude of impact of the proposals on the low heritage value of the bridge would be moderate. Taking into consideration Paragraph 216 of the NPPF, a balanced judgement is required, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the heritage value of the NDA. The potential impact on the heritage value of the bridge should be balanced against the heritage benefit of maintaining the bridge in its original historic function, the benefits of the associated repairs to the bridge plus the wider public benefit of maintaining unrestricted vehicle access across the bridge from Church Lane. The proposals are therefore considered to conform to the relevant local and national planning heritage policies.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BRB	British Railways Board
CA	Conservation Area
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
GER	Great Eastern Railway
HE	Historic England
HER	Historic Environment Record
HRE	Historical Railways Estate
LBC	Listed Building Consent
LBHPAs	Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreements
MDC	Maldon District Council
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
MWBR	Maldon-Witham branch line
NGR	National Grid Reference
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
WHS	World Heritage Site
OS	Ordnance Survey
PD	Permitted Development
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Jacobs UK Ltd (Jacobs) has been commissioned by the Historical Railways Estate (HRE) to prepare a Heritage Statement to support a planning application to Maldon District Council (MDC) for the proposed works to Church Lane bridge (HRE Ref: WFM/836) ('the bridge'). The bridge is located south of Stow Maries village in the county of Essex, centred approximately on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ8349899171 and its Ordnance Survey (OS) coordinates are: 583514, 199156; the nearest postcode is CM3 6SJ.

The Church Lane overbridge (WFM/836) (Asset 1) which is recorded on the Essex Historic Environment Records (HER) (HER: 48655) as 'Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line (Monument)' carries an unclassified road, Church Lane, over the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway line (Asset 2), close to the former Stow Maries Halt (Asset 3). The bridge is located adjacent to the former 'Stow Maries Halt' (Asset 3), a station dating to 1928, which now forms part of a nature reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust.

The bridge was constructed in c. 1888 for the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (also known as the 'Woodham Ferris & Maldon' line) which became part of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) and later the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The Woodham Ferris to Maldon Railway branch line opened on 1st October 1889 and formed part of a link from London to Southend-on-Sea.

As the bridge (Asset 1) is recorded on the HER for Essex as the 'Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East' (HER: 48628) it is therefore a considered non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) within the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The bridge is not designated as a Listed Building by Historic England (HE) and is not located within a Conservation Area or recorded by MDC as a locally listed building in Stow Maries. The closest designated heritage asset to the bridge is Mill Cottage a Grade II Listed Building (NHLE ref: 1306750) which is c. 85m north of the bridge in Stow Maries. However, this heritage asset is considered sufficiently removed and screened from the bridge so that it would be unaffected by the proposals.

The supporting HRE engineering reports have assessed the structure as being in poor condition with multiple transverse fractures in the side arch barrels which extend through the spandrels and into the parapets above. The bridge was broadly stable for some time, the majority of the transverse fractures having occurred due to settlement in the substructure some time ago.

Additional concerns arose due to the failure of a similar bridge nearby, WFM/833 'Woodham Road', which had an abutment suddenly start sinking in 2019. This required the road over the bridge (WFM/833) to be closed and resulted in a significant amount of traffic, including a number of HGVs, being diverted over the Church Lane bridge (WFM/836) (Asset 1). The Church Lane Bridge was monitored on a fortnightly basis for the duration of the diversion and showed no significant signs of distress at the time. On completion of the works to WFM/833, the structure (Asset 1) was monitored on a three-monthly basis for approximately a year and then a six-monthly basis until January 2025 when a new transverse fracture appeared in the northern arch, in the haunch above the abutment with associated fractures in the spandrels and parapets indicating movement in the substructure. A road closure was put in place and it is currently being inspected monthly due to the significant deterioration.

The HRE's detailed design proposals to support the bridge and arrest any further deterioration consist of supporting the structure with a corrugated steel arch under the centre span and partly infilling around it with concrete. The central steel arch would allow access along the former railway line, which passes beneath the bridge, to be maintained, which is now the public right of way (PROW).

1.2 National Highways Responsibilities

National Highways is the custodian of the HRE, which is responsible for curating approximately 3,100 bridges, tunnels and viaducts, including 77 listed structures which are disused railway structures. The HRE is a

government-funded organisation whose remit is to maintain disused railway structures across the United Kingdom on behalf of the Department for Transport. The HRE has a responsibility and liability to maintain these structures in a safe condition whilst ensuring this duty is balanced against the cost to the taxpayer.

The HRE includes legacy bridges, abutments, tunnels, cuttings, viaducts and similar properties associated with closed railway lines. These structures were not transferred to Railtrack, which became Network Rail in 2002, when British Rail was privatised in 1994 but stayed with the British Railways Board (BRB), which was part of the Strategic Rail Authority. The Department for Transport took responsibility for the BRB estate when the Strategic Rail Authority was disbanded in 2005 and it was then passed to the Highways Agency in 2013 when the BRB was abolished.

1.3 Aims of the Heritage Statement

The aim of this Heritage Statement is to assess the heritage values of the historic environment within the study area and the proposed scheme's potential impacts on the historic environment, in accordance with requirements of the recommendations in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2024) and the *Planning Practice Guidance* (PPG) (MHCLG, 2024).

This Heritage Statement also follows the guidance contained in Historic England's (HE) *Advice Note 12 Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2019) and the HE's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2017).

1.4 Disclaimer

This Heritage Statement is based primarily on the sources of information summarised in Section 3.3 of this report. It has been prepared exclusively for Jacobs' clients and no liability is accepted for any use or reliance on the report by the third parties. The report should be read in full and excerpts cannot be considered representative of the findings.

The report is based on publicly available data sources which have been used in good faith and are considered sufficient to inform this study. Jacobs is not responsible for the accuracy of this data, which has been generated and maintained by third parties.

Whilst professional guidance has been used, the conclusions reached in this report are based primarily on professional judgement.

2. Relevant National Planning Policy

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

In March 2012, the Government published the NPPF which has been subsequently updated, most recently by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in 2024 (MHCLG, 2024). The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and a key dimension of 'sustainability' is defined as '*...protecting and enhancing our...historic environment*' (MHCLG, 2024).

The NPPF recognises the historic environment as comprising all aspects of the environment which have resulted from the interaction between people and places through time (MHCLG, 2024, Annex 2: Glossary). The elements of the historic environment that are considered to hold significance are called heritage assets (MHCLG, 2024, Annex 2: Glossary).

Significance is defined by the NPPF as '*the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest*'. This significance or value may be related to a heritage asset's archaeological, architectural and artistic or historic elements and can derive not only from its physical presence but also from its setting (MHCLG, 2024). The NPPF details the main policies regarding heritage assets in Section 12, '*Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*' (MHCLG, 2024).

The NPPF (paragraph 207) requires that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 208 states:

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 210 of the NPPF states that, local planning authorities should take into account:

In determining application, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

Paragraph 205 states that:

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When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 213 states:

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

Paragraph 214 states that:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- (a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- (b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- (c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- (d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

Paragraph 215 states that:

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 216 states that:

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Paragraph 219 states:

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Paragraph 220 states:

Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 207 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 209, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

2.2 Planning Practice Guide

The Planning Practice Guide (PPG) provides additional planning guidance to be used in conjunction with the NPPF.

The PPG (MHCLG, 2024) identifies heritage assets as:

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

The glossary annexed to the PPG (MHCLG, 2024) defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

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

The PPG (MHCLG, 2024) clarifies this additional requirement under 'What is the main legislative framework for planning and the historic environment?' where it states that:

Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings and conservation areas must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular sections 16, 66 and 72) as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.

(Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 18a-001-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019)

The PPG states under 'What is 'significance'? that:

'Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework definition further states that in the planning context heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

(Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 18a-006-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019)

The PPG states under 'Why is 'significance' important in decision-taking?' that:

Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.

(Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 18a-007-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019)

The PPG states under 'What is the setting of a heritage asset and how should it be taken into account?' that:

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time. (Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 18a-013-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019).

The PPG states under 'When is securing a heritage asset's optimum viable use appropriate in planning terms?' that:

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 196) requires that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use of that asset.

Where a heritage asset is capable of having a use, then securing its optimum viable use should be taken into account in assessing the public benefits of a proposed development.

'Area-based' designated heritage assets such as World Heritage Sites and conservation areas will not themselves have a single use (though any individual heritage assets within them may). Therefore, securing the optimum viable use of the area-based asset as a whole is not a relevant consideration in assessing the public benefits of development proposals affecting such heritage assets. However, securing the optimum viable use of any individual heritage assets within the area-based designated heritage asset may still be a relevant consideration.

Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 18a-016-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019

The PPG states under 'How are non-designated heritage assets identified?' that:

There are a number of processes through which non-designated heritage assets may be identified, including the local and neighbourhood plan-making processes and conservation area appraisals and reviews. Irrespective of how they are identified, it is important that the decisions to identify them as non-designated heritage assets are based on sound evidence.

Plan-making bodies should make clear and up to date information on non-designated heritage assets accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers. This includes information on the criteria used to select non-designated heritage assets and information about the location of existing assets.

It is important that all non-designated heritage assets are clearly identified as such. In this context, it can be helpful if local planning authorities keep a local list of non-designated heritage assets, incorporating any such assets which are identified by neighbourhood planning bodies. (See the Historic England website for advice on local lists) They should also ensure that up to date information about non-designated heritage assets is included in the local historic environment record.

In some cases, local planning authorities may also identify non-designated heritage assets as part of the decision-making process on planning applications, for example, following archaeological investigations. It is helpful if plans note areas with potential for the discovery of non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interest. The historic environment record will be a useful indicator of archaeological potential in the area.

Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019

2.3 Local Planning Policy

Stow Maries is located within the planning authority of Maldon District Council (MDC) within the County of Essex. The policies relevant to this assessment are found in the Maldon District Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) 2014 – 2029 which was approved by the Secretary of State in July 2017. The following policies are relevant:

- Policy D3: Conservation and Heritage Assets
- *Policy H4: Effective Use of Land Replacement Dwellings*
- *Policy S1: Sustainable Development*
- *Policy S3: Place Shaping*
- *Policy D1: Design Quality and Built Environment*
- *Policy H4: Effective Use of Land Replacement Dwellings*

The relevant part of these policies is included in more detail in Appendix D.

2.4 Historic England Good Practice Advice

Historic England (HE) has produced guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the NPPF and PPG with regard to the historic environment as follows:

- *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking* (Historic England, 2015a);
- *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2017);
- *Advice Note 2 Making Changes to Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2016);
- *Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing* (Historic England, 2016); and
- *Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Scope of the Assessment

This Heritage Statement provides an assessment of the heritage value (significance) of the Church Lane bridge (WFM/836) (Asset 1) and the heritage assets within the study area surrounding it. It provides additional information to inform the local authority decision-making process in accordance with the requirements of the paragraph 207 of the NPPF (MHCLG, 2024) and *Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2019). The location of the Church Lane Bridge is marked by the arrow in the Figure 3-1 below.



Figure 3-1. Location of the Church Lane Bridge marked by orange arrow (Not to Scale)

3.2 Study Area

The study area has been defined as the area within a 50m radius from the centre of the bridge. All identified heritage assets within the 50m study area have been included whilst any designated assets outside that area were also considered on a site-by-site basis where they are related to the bridge or have the potential to be affected. The location of the bridge (labelled as Asset 1) and extent of the 50m radius study area are shown on Figure 3-2 below.

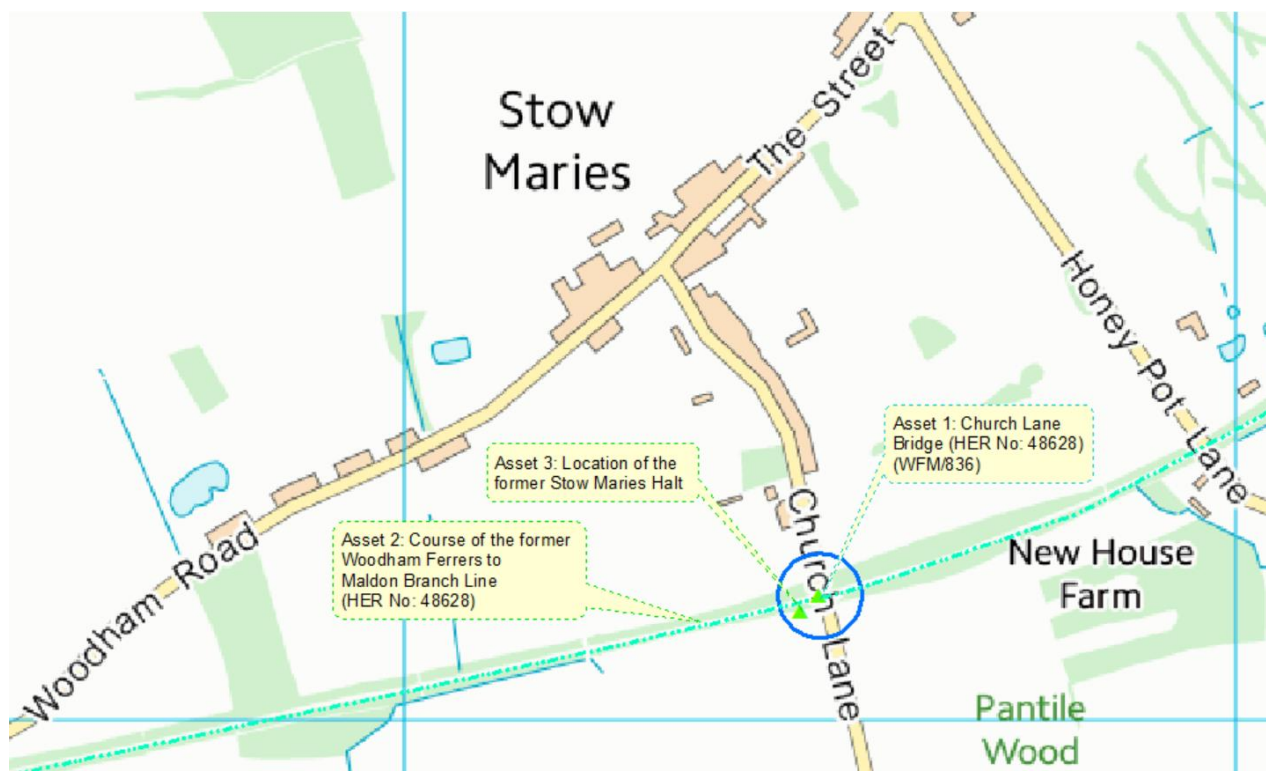


Figure 3-2. The identified heritage assets are shown within the 50m study area (shown as a blue circle). The Church Lane Bridge (Asset 1) is indicated by a green triangle. The former Woodham Ferraers to Maldon railway (Asset 2) is indicated by a green dotted line. The former Stow Maries Hall (Asset 3) is also indicated by a green triangle (Not To Scale)

3.3 Data Gathering

The primary and secondary data to support this assessment has been collected from the following sources:

- Historic England's National Heritage List for England (NHLE);
- Essex County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) available online and through the Heritage Gateway website;
- MDC's website for planning policy and information on local listed buildings and Conservation Areas;
- Essex Society for Archaeology and History reports (online);
- HRE sources including technical reports and repair history for the bridge;
- Historic mapping available from the National Library of Scotland;
- Historic aerial photographs available from Britain from Above and Historic England; and
- Various online sources relating to the history of the bridge and associated railways.

3.4 Description of Heritage Interest

For the purposes of this report, the assessment of the value (significance) of the heritage assets has been based on professional judgement, but informed by the guidance provided in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2015) and the *Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings* (BS7913:2013) (British Standards Institution, 2013, p.16). In accordance with this guidance, each heritage asset has been considered relative to the following four main categories of heritage interest:

- Historical interest, which is derived from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present it tends to be illustrative or associative. Illustrative value is the perception of a place as a link between past and present people and depends on visibility. It has the power to aid interpretation of the past through making connections with and providing insights into

past communities and their activities through shared experience of a place. By contrast, associative value need not necessarily be legible at an asset. But gives a particular resonance through association with a notable family, person, event or movement;

- Evidential interest, which is derived from the potential of a place to yield evidence about the past from physical remains (e.g. archaeology);
- Aesthetic interest, which is derived from ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This encompasses things purposely designed for that effect and those that are not (e.g. the picturesque, the sublime). The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place can be the result of conscious design or fortuitous outcome or a combination of the two aspects. The latter can result from the enhancement of the appearance of a place through the passage of time; and
- Communal interest, which is derived from the meanings of a place for people who relate to it in different ways, associations with social groups and individuals. This can change over time. This can be through widely acknowledged commemorative or symbolic value that reflects the meaning of the place, or through more informal social value as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence. Spiritual value may also be part of communal value.

The four attributes of heritage interest listed above can be broadly equated with the three attributes of heritage value given in the glossary of the NPPF, which are: Architectural/Artistic interest; Archaeological interest; and Historic interest.

3.5 Assessment of the Contribution of the Setting to Heritage Value

The contribution of the setting to the value of the heritage assets was also assessed in accordance with the guidance provided in the *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2017) which states that:

Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes pertaining to, the heritage asset's surroundings (Historic England, 2017, 4).

The following assessment of value includes the contribution made by setting in reference to Historic England's guidance and comprises:

- the physical surroundings of the asset, including its relationship with other heritage assets;
- the way the asset is appreciated; and
- the asset's associations and patterns of use.

The NPPF Glossary (MHCLG, 2024, Annex 2) also notes that '*Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting*' and goes on to define the setting of a heritage asset as:

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may contribute to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (MHCLG, 2024).

3.6 Assessment of Heritage Value

Based on the assessment of each asset's combined heritage values, and the contribution of its setting to that value, each heritage asset has then been attributed to one of the following five categories of heritage interest: Very High, High, Medium, Low and Negligible.

This five-point scale of heritage value is published in the *British Standard Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings BS7913:2013* (British Standards Institution, 2013, 16), and is used by the methodology in the DMRB (Volume 11, Section 3, Part 2) (HA 208/07) (Highways Agency et al) (See Table 3-1 below).

Table 3-1. Indicative values for historic building heritage assets (After DMRB-HA 208/07)

Criteria for Establishing Value of Historic Buildings	
Very High	- Structures inscribed as of universal importance as World Heritage Sites. - Other buildings of recognised international importance.
High	- Scheduled Monuments with standing remains. - Grade I and Grade II* (Scotland: Category A) Listed Buildings. - Other listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations not adequately reflected in the listing grade. - Conservation Areas containing very important buildings. - Undesignated structures of clear national importance.
Medium	- Grade II (Scotland: Category B) Listed Buildings. - Historic (unlisted) buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations. - Conservation Areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character. - Historic Townscape or built-up areas with important historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (e.g. including street furniture and other structures).
Low	'Locally Listed' buildings (Scotland Category C(S) Listed Buildings). - Historic (unlisted) buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical association. - Historic Townscape or built-up areas of limited historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (e.g. including street furniture and other structures).
Negligible	Buildings of no architectural or historical note; buildings of an intrusive character.
Unknown	Buildings with some hidden (i.e. inaccessible) potential for historic significance.

3.7 Standards and Guidance

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the following standards and guidance:

- British Standards Institution, 2013, *British Standard Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings BS7913:2013*;
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2017, *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment*;
- English Heritage, 2008, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*;
- Highways Agency et al, 2001, *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 11, Section 3, Part 2. Environmental Assessment: Cultural Heritage* (HA208/07);
- Historic England, 2015, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking*;
- Historic England, 2017, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning - Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*;
- Historic England, 2019, Advice Note 12: Statements of Significance*; and
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, National Planning Policy Framework; and
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

4. Historic and Archaeological Context

4.1 Historic Background to the Railway Bridge

In July 1883, the GER received Parliamentary authorisation for the 'New Essex Lines' scheme which was partly designed to encourage direct passenger traffic between Colchester and Southend-on-Sea.

The first of the main Essex railway lines to open was the 'Maldon to Witham & Braintree' line, (later known as the Maldon-Witham branch line) (MWBR), a new 9 km (5 3/4 miles) long branch line which was opened in 1848. The line failed to prosper and was absorbed by the Eastern Counties Railway (ECR). In 1862 the Eastern Counties along with the Norfolk, Eastern Union, East Anglian, and East Suffolk railway companies all amalgamated to form the GER. The GER in turn became one of constituent companies of LNER in 1923 under the Railways Act 1921.

In October 1889 a railway line was opened from Shenfield to Southend-on-Sea by the GER. A connecting branch line railway (Asset 2) was built by the GER in 1888 from Woodham Ferris (later re-named 'Woodham Ferrers') to Maldon to give it direct access to Southend-on-Sea and London. Since the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon line was intended to form part of a through-line between Colchester and Southend-on-Sea, triangular junctions were made at Wickford, Maldon and Witham to enable this routing. The Woodham Ferris-Maldon branch line was thereby joined to the Maldon-Witham branch line by a triangular junction to the north of the town. Apart from Woodham Ferrers, the other stations along the line were at Cold Norton and Maldon West, with Maldon station being renamed 'Maldon East' in October 1889.

The Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (Asset 2) was initially opened to goods traffic in November 1888 but passengers were also carried from October 1889. Despite the Woodham Ferrers' to Maldon (Asset 2) branch line connecting the Essex Railways to the coast, the extension was not commercially successful due to a lack of demand. A direct passenger train from Colchester through Witham, Maldon and onto to Southend, was not therefore provided on the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon line until February 1895.

In 1914 the number of passenger trains along the line was reduced from seven to five per day due to the outbreak of war. Although the line was used for troop movements, Maldon West was closed for three years during the WWI.

Following the end of WWI, in 1919, Maldon West was re-opened and a number of 'specials' were run for children's outings to Southend and, while some significant traffic came in and out of Maldon East from the Witham and Braintree line, the Woodham Ferrers branch was commercially less successful. Since passenger use on the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (Asset 2) remained low, in an attempt to control costs, a Conductor-Guard operation was introduced from October 1922 onwards.

In 1923 the GER became part of the LNER, under the 1921 Railways Act which amalgamated Britain's Railways into the 'Big Four' companies. The LNER subsequently converted the Maldon curve to a single-track line in 1924, and the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon section was made a single signalling section by 1933. On 24th September 1928 the LNER opened what was originally named the 'Stow St. Mary Halt' (Asset 3) (also known as the Stow Maries Halt) to the south of Stow Maries village, located adjacent the Church Lane bridge (Asset 1) (WFM/836).

The financial losses made by the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon line became unsustainable and the final passenger service ran in September 1939, following the outbreak of WWII. However, during WWII, the line continued to take trains for military purposes, taking troops to the encampment on Osea Island, and serving the timber mill at Maldon which made motor torpedo boats and fishing boats.

In 1948, the Government nationalised Britain's railways, canals, sea and shipping ports and bus companies in the aftermath of WWII. The 'Big Four' railway companies were effectively bankrupt, and nationalisation was intended to implement stability in transport policy. The nationalisation of Britain's railways led to the Essex lines being taken over by British Railways (Eastern Region).

After WWII, only a goods train between Woodham Ferrers and Maldon still ran once a day until April 1953 when the line was closed completely. Maldon West station was used for warehousing by Marconi Ltd, and the station link to Maldon East was closed in 1959 with the rails being lifted in 1960.

Heritage Statement: Church Lane Bridge (WFM/836)

During the 1970s the construction of new town of South Woodham Ferrers largely obliterated the branch line railway tracks (Asset 2) from Cold Norton to Maldon. Although the former railway line is marked by lengths of former cuttings, embankments and bridges, much of the land on that section is now in private hands.

The Church Lane overbridge (WFM/836) (Asset 1) carries an unclassified road, Church Lane, over the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway branch line (Asset 2), close to the former Stow Maries Halt (Asset 3), a former station dating to 1928, which now forms part of a nature reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust. The bridge is not designated as a Listed Building and is not located within a Conservation Area or recorded by Maldon District Council as a locally listed building in Stow Maries. The closest designated heritage asset to the bridge is Mill Cottage a Grade II Listed Building (NHLE ref: 1306750) which is c. 85m from the bridge. However, this heritage asset is considered sufficiently removed and screened from the bridge so that it would be unaffected by the proposals.

The bridge was constructed in c. 1888 for the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (also known as the 'Woodham Ferris & Maldon' line) by the GER which became part of the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) in 1923, under the Railways Act 1921, when over 120 railways across Britain were merged into four large companies known as the 'Big Four'.

The Church Lane bridge is a three-span arched structure, built of blue-grey engineering bricks it has brick arches formed from five courses of brickwork. The spandrels include a pattern of alternating courses of red and blue-grey engineering bricks. The brickwork at parapet level is formed into panels with dogtooth decoration created using protruding, on-edge brickwork.

The bridge was constructed in c. 1888 for the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (also known as the 'Woodham Ferris & Maldon' line) which became part of the GER and later the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The bridge is located adjacent to the former 'Stow Maries Halt' (Asset 3), a station dating to 1928, which now forms part of a nature reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust.

5. Assessment of Heritage Value

5.1 Summary of the Baseline

There are three heritage assets identified within the 50m study area which are: Church Lane bridge (Asset 1); the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway line (Asset 3); and the former Stow Maries Halt (Asset 2).

The historic, evidential, aesthetic (architectural) and communal values of these heritage assets are discussed in Sections 5.2 to 5.4.

A review of designated assets outside of the study area revealed one heritage asset c. 85m from the bridge which is: Mill Cottage, a Grade II Listed Building (NHLE ref: 1306750). However, this heritage asset is considered sufficiently distant and well-screened from the bridge that no impacts on this asset are predicted as a result of changes to its setting. Therefore, no further assessment of this Listed Building is included in this Heritage Statement.

5.2 Asset 1: Church Lane Bridge (WFM/836)

5.2.1 Historic Value:

Church Lane Bridge (Asset 1) dates from c.1888 which fits within the period of '1870 to 1914', classified by Historic England as the fourth phase the British railway network (Historic England, 2017). Historic England consider 'phase 4' as the late phase of British railway development which saw the completion of the railway network in Britain (Historic England, 2017). Historic England in *Infrastructure: Transport: Listing Selection Guide* (2017) state the following in respect of railway structures that post-date c.1860:

'The English railway system was constructed across a busy and often undulating landscape, necessitating the construction of many bridges. and viaducts. Up to the 1880s, many of these bridges were executed in masonry or brick. Early examples shared a lot in common with canal and road bridges, and often sport careful masonry in their detailing: date, degree of survival and design will be the principal considerations, while for later bridges it will be engineering interest which is a key determinant.'

'Increasingly rigorous selection is required for buildings after about 1860: this reflects both the quantity of what remains, and the standardisation of design which was applied to buildings and structures erected along different railway lines.'

In relation to bridges in particular, it is stated that:

'...date, degree of survival and design will be the principal considerations, while for later bridges it will be engineering interest which is a key determinant.'

There are no significant historical associations with the bridge and its late date of construction contributes to its low historical value.

5.2.2 Evidential Value:

The Church Lane overbridge carries a road over the structure which is 3.40m wide with grass verges lining both side of the road which are 2.30m wide and 1.90m wide on the east and west sides respectively. The bridge is a three-span arched structure, built of blue-grey engineering bricks and has brick arches formed from five courses of brickwork. The spandrels include a pattern of alternating courses of red and blue-grey engineering bricks (Plate 1). The brickwork at parapet level is formed into panels with dogtooth decoration, created using protruding, on-edge brickwork (Plate 2). The substructure comprises gravity-type abutments constructed from brick. The wingwalls and parapets are also constructed from brickwork.

The various HRE condition reports indicate that the bridge is in poor condition with transverse fractures in the side arch barrels which extend through the spandrels and into the parapets.

The bridge is considered to have some evidential interest as a late 19th century structure. However, it is constructed from standard engineering bricks which are industrially manufactured materials, and its evidential value is considered to be limited. The bridge has been assessed as being of low evidential value.

5.2.3 Aesthetic Value:

The bridge is built of brick with some limited decorative features which are confined to the spandrels including a pattern of alternating courses of red and blue-grey engineering bricks. The brickwork at parapet level is formed into panels with dogtooth decoration, created using protruding, on-edge brickwork (Plate 1).

The bridge, therefore, does have some limited aesthetic and architectural interest in relation to the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway and within the Stowe Maries Wildlife Reserve. The structure is well-designed but has limited aesthetic value due to its lack of architectural detailing and its poor condition. Given the above, the bridge is considered to be of low aesthetic value.

5.2.4 Communal Value:

The bridge is recorded by Essex's HER as the '*Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East*' (HER Number: 48655) and it is therefore considered to be non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) within the terms of the NPPF.

The bridge, as a structure on the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon Railway (Asset 2) within the Stowe Maries Wildlife Reserve, does have communal and landmark value. The former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway below the bridge is also a public right of way which has communal value and is also recorded on the Essex HER (HER Number: 48628). As such, the asset is considered to have low communal value.

5.2.5 Contribution of the Setting:

The setting of the bridge is formed by the Stow Marie Wildlife Trust, the former Stow Marie Halt (Asset 3) and the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon Railway line (now a PRow). The former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway passes through part of the site although little remains of it except the green corridor through the site which forms a footpath. The setting of the bridge therefore allows some appreciation of its historical and functional interest as a former railway structure. The setting is considered to make a moderate positive contribution to the heritage value of the bridge.

5.2.6 Overall Value:

In relation to the bridge, Historic England (2017) identify the following key criteria for use in determining whether a structure should be considered for formal heritage designation. The bridge, which is in poor condition, derives its significance from all four of the heritage values, consisting of low historic, communal and evidential value and architectural value. It is therefore considered to be of low heritage value overall, in accordance with the criteria presented in Table 3-1 above, which is consistent with its status as an NDHA.

5.3 Asset 2: Woodham Ferrers to Maldon Railway Line

5.3.1 Historic Value:

The Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line was opened by the GER in c.1888 but failed to prosper and later became part of the LNER in 1923 under the Railways Act 1921.

The Woodham Ferrers to Maldon line was intended to form part of a through-line between Colchester and Southend-on-Sea. The Woodham Ferris-Maldon branch line was thereby joined to the Maldon-Witham branch line by a triangular junction to the north of the town. Apart from Woodham Ferrers, the other stations along the line were at Cold Norton and Maldon West, with Maldon station being later renamed 'Maldon East' in October 1889.

The Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line (Asset 2) was initially opened to goods traffic in November 1888 but a passenger service was introduced in October 1889. Despite the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon (Asset 2)

branch line connecting the Essex Railways to the coast, the extension was not commercially successful due to a lack of demand.

The line was reduced during WWI and due to financial losses, the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon line became unsustainable and the final passenger service ran in September 1939. After WWII only one goods train ran between Woodham Ferrers and Maldon once a day but this too was closed completely in April 1953 and the rails were lifted in 1960. Today the part of the line within the study area forms a PRoW and part of the Stow Maries Nature Reserve. The former railway is considered to have low historic value.

5.3.2 Evidential (Archaeological) Value:

The former railway line was built in c.1888 and, in terms of its evidential value, it demonstrates the development of the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line from the 4th phase of railways in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Historic England, 2017).

The line was gradually reduced down from WWI onwards until it was closed completely in April 1953 and the rails were finally lifted in 1960. The construction of the new town of South Woodham Ferrers during the 1970s largely obliterated much of the former branch line railway tracks from Cold Norton to Maldon and, although the line is marked by lengths of former cuttings, embankments and bridges, much of the land on that section is now in private hands.

Today the part of the former railway within the study area forms a PRoW and part of the Stow Maries Nature Reserve. The former railway line is considered to have negligible evidential value.

5.3.3 Aesthetic (Architectural) Value:

The remains of the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line have some aesthetic value as a PRoW and its preservation of a green corridor within the nature reserve. However, due to the absence of surviving remains and its utilitarian nature it is therefore assessed as being of negligible aesthetic value.

5.3.4 Communal Value:

The Essex HER records the former railway line as '*Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line (Monument)*' as (HER Number: 48628). The heritage asset is therefore considered to be NDHA within the terms of the NPPF which contributes to the railways communal value. The surviving Church Lane bridge (WFM/836) (Asset 1) is also recorded on the Essex HER (HER: 48655) as '*Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line (Monument)*'. As the former line is also a PRoW, the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line is assessed as being of low communal value.

5.3.5 Contribution of the Setting:

The setting of the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon Railway line, now a PRoW, is confined to the Stow Marie Wildlife Trust, the former Stow Marie Halt (Asset 3) and the Church Lane bridge (Asset 1). The former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon railway forms a green corridor which is used as a footpath. The setting of the former railway therefore allows some appreciation of its historical and functional interest. The setting is considered to make a moderate positive contribution to the heritage value of the former railway line.

5.3.6 Overall Assessment of Significance

As outlined above, the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line is of low historic and communal and negligible aesthetic and evidential value. The former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line formed part of the 4th phase industrial period and was removed in the 1960s. Overall the former railway line is assessed as having a low heritage value which is consistent with its status as a NDHA.

5.4 Asset 3: Stow Maries Halt

5.4.1 Historic Value

The former Stow St. Mary Halt was not opened until 24 September 1928, about 9 years after the nearby 'Stow Maries Aerodrome' had become disused. The halt was village located to the south of the Stow Maries village which it served. The halt was originally named Stow St. Mary Halt not after the village supposedly, on the insistence of the vicar of the local St. Mary's church.

The station was closed in September 1939 when the passenger service ended but the line continued as a part of the goods service until 1959 when it was closed and the railway line was lifted in 1960. The halt is now Stow Maries Halt nature reserve, which is managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust.

5.4.2 Evidential (Archaeological) Value:

The former Stow St. Mary Halt was a simple station consisting of a basic platform built in 1928. After the station was closed in September 1939 when the passenger service ended the line was closed in 1959 and the rails were lifted in 1960, the concrete platform survives but is of limited evidential value. The halt is now part of Stow Maries Halt nature reserve, which is managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust. In terms of evidential value, the remains of the former Stow St. Mary Halt, which was built in 1928, have minimal visible surviving remains and are of negligible value.

5.4.3 Aesthetic (Architectural) Value:

The former Stow Marie Halt was a simple station consisting of a basic platform built in 1928 which closed in September 1939 and the rails were lifted in 1960. The simple concrete platform survives but is of negligible aesthetic value.

5.4.4 Communal Value:

The former Stow Marie Halt is not recorded on the Essex HER and not therefore considered to be an NDHA within the terms of the NPPF. The former halt has minimal visible surviving remains and are not a prominent landmark and as such, the former Stow St. Mary Halt is assessed as being of negligible communal value.

5.4.5 Contribution of the Setting:

The setting of the former halt (Asset 3) is confined to the Stow Marie Wildlife Trust, the former Church Lane bridge (asset 1) and the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon Railway line (now a PRoW) (Asset 2). The setting of the bridge therefore allows some limited appreciation of its historical and functional interest as a former railway structure. The setting is considered to make a minor positive contribution to the heritage value of the halt.

5.4.6 Overall Assessment of Significance

As outlined above, the former Stow Marie Halt on the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line is of negligible historic, evidential, aesthetic and communal value.

5.5 Summary of Historic Map Regression

5.5.1 1896 Ordnance Survey (OS) 2nd Edition

The 1896 OS (reference: Essex LXII.9) is the earliest historic map to record the Church Lane bridge (Asset 1) and the Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch line railway (Asset 2). The Stow Marie Halt (Asset 3) is not shown due to its later construction date (1928).

The OS shows the bridge (Asset 1) is located to the south of Stow Maries village and immediately west of a cutting. The railway line (Asset 2) is labelled '*Woodham Ferris & Maldon Line*' and '*GER*'. As a rural site, the

immediate setting of the bridge is largely agricultural with Church Lane, the cutting and Mill Cottage to the north forming the main historic features which are still extant.



Figure 5-1. 1896 OS Map. Study area shown in blue (Not To Scale)

5.5.2 1922 OS Map

The 1922 OS map (reference: Essex LXXIII.4) (Figure 5-2) shows no substantive changes from the earlier OS map. However, the railway line (Asset 2) is now labelled 'Woodham Ferrers & Maldon Line' and 'GER', reflecting the name change of the Woodham station. The immediate and wider setting of the bridge (asset 1) remains unchanged from the 1896 OS map.



Figure 5-2. 1922 OS Map. Study area shown in blue (Not To Scale)

5.5.3 1960 OS Map

The 1960 OS Map (reference: TQ89NW) shows changes (Figure 5-3) in that the railway (asset 2) is now labelled as 'disused railway' following its closure in 1959. Although the halt (asset 3) had been built in 1928, it is not labelled on this map. The remainder of the immediate and wider setting of the bridge is depicted as unchanged from the 1922 OS map.



Figure 5-3. 1960 OS Map. Study area shown in blue (Not To Scale)

5.5.4 1974 OS Map

The 1974 OS Map (reference: TQ89) (Figure 5-4) again shows that few changes from the 1960 OS map, and the immediate and wider setting remains the same as depicted on that map.



Figure 5-4. 1974 OS Map. Study area shown in blue (Not To Scale)

5.5.5 Ordnance Survey Aerial Photograph. 1945 Survey Air Photo Mosaic Sheet scale): 51/89 N.W. / TQ 89 N.W.



Figure 5-5. 1945 OS Aerial Photograph. 1945. Study area shown in blue (Not To Scale)

The 1945 OS aerial photographic survey of the area around the bridge (Asset 2) (Figure 5-5) shows the crossing of the bridge (Asset 1) over the railway (Asset 2) but there are no visible signs of the Stow Maries Halt (Asset 3). The immediate and wider setting remains the same as those depicted on the later 1974 OS map (Figure 5-4).

6. Impact of the Conservation Works

6.1 Introduction

The available engineering inspection reports undertaken by HRE provide clear evidence of the state of the Church Lane bridge (Asset 1) (WFM/836) which has been assessed as being in poor condition but has been broadly stable for some years. Like many similar three span arch structures in the same area the abutments appear to have settled leaving transverse fractures in the arch barrels extending into the spandrels and parapets above. The bridge was broadly stable for some time with the majority of the fractures and settlement having occurred some time ago.

Additional concerns arose after the failure of a similar nearby bridge on Woodham Road (WFM/833) which had an abutment suddenly start subsiding in 2019. This required the road over the Woodham Road bridge (WFM/833) to be closed and resulted in a significant amount of traffic, including a number of HGVs, being diverted over the Church Lane bridge (WFM/836) (Asset 1). The Church Lane Bridge (Asset 1) was monitored by HRE on a fortnightly basis for the duration of the diversion and showed no significant signs of distress at the time. On completion of the works to WFM/833, the structure (Asset 1) was monitored on a 3 monthly basis for approximately a year and then a six-monthly basis until January 2025 when a new transverse fracture appeared in the northern arch. A road closure was put in place and it is currently being monitored on a monthly basis due to significant deterioration.

The HRE's detailed design proposals keep the Church Lane open by arresting any further deterioration consist of supporting the structure with a steel Multiplate Arch (corrugated) under the centre span and infilling the surrounding void around it with foamed concrete. The central steel arch would maintain access along the former railway line (Asset 2), which passes beneath the bridge, and is now a PRow. The two side arch spans of the bridge would be infilled with structural granular fill and foamed concrete. This would maintain access for the PRow beneath the structure whilst supporting the bridge and maintain the road above it.

The steel Multiplate Arch would be offset within the bridge arch due to the toe of the existing northern railway cutting embankment finishing approximately in line with the crown (mid-point) of the centre arch. Offsetting the Multiplate Arch will limit the amount of excavation and re-grading of the existing embankment required for its installation. New embankments will be formed against each face of the structure.

The centre span around the Multiplate Arch would be filled with foamed concrete and the side spans are to be filled with 6N fill until no longer practicable and then finished with foamed concrete.

There will also be brickwork repairs to the bridge including re-pointing of open joints and replacement of spalled bricks using materials to match existing along the parapets.

The proposed works are considered to result in heritage benefits to the bridge, a NDHA, by arresting the growing cracks in the bridge as well as repairing various spalled brick and re-pointing of the structure. The works would have a moderate impact on the heritage value of the structure from the infilling works which will affect its low architectural/aesthetic value by obscuring part of its structure, although there would a negligible impact on the historic legibility and communal and evidential values. The moderate impact on a heritage asset of low value would result in a slight significance of impact.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The bridge (Asset 1), which dates from c.1888, is recorded by Essex's HER as the '*Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East*' (HER Number: 48655) and is therefore considered to be non-designated heritage assets NDHA within the terms of the NPPF. The bridge is not a Listed Building and is not located within a Conservation Area and not recorded by Maldon District Council as a locally listed buildings in Stow Maries.

The Church Lane Bridge is a three-span arched structure, which is built of blue-grey engineering bricks with the brick arches formed from five courses of brickwork. The spandrels include a pattern of alternating courses of red and blue-grey engineering bricks. The brickwork at parapet level is formed into panels with dogtooth decoration created using protruding, on-edge brickwork. The bridge was assessed as having low overall heritage value which is consistent with its status as an NDHA.

The course of the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line (Asset 2) below the bridge is now a PRow which has communal value. The former railway line is also recorded on the Essex HER (HER Number: 48628) and is therefore also a NDHA.

The former 'Stow Maries Halt' (also known as the Stow St. Mary Halt railway station) (Asset 3) served the village of Stow Maries and was opened in September 1928 by the LNER. The halt closed in September 1939 but the line remained in use for goods traffic until 1959. The remains of the Stow Maries Halt are now part of a nature reserve which is managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust and includes the remnants of the former railway as a PRow.

The supporting HRE engineering reports have assessed the Church Lane Bridge as being in poor condition with multiple transverse fractures in the side arch barrels which extend through the spandrels and into the parapets above. Although the bridge was broadly stable, the majority of the transverse fractures having occurred due to settlement in the substructure some time ago, a new transverse fracture appeared in January 2025 prompting a road closure and an increased monitoring programme with monthly inspections.

The HRE's detailed design proposals would support the bridge and arrest any further deterioration. The proposals consist of supporting the bridge with a corrugated steel arch under the centre span and partly infilling around the void with concrete. The central steel arch would allow continued access along the former railway line, which passes beneath the bridge, to be maintained as a PRow. Furthermore the spalled brickwork of the bridge would be repaired and the parapets of the bridge would be re-pointed.

As stated in the NPPF, Paragraph 216, the '*effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*'

In conclusion, the proposals are considered to have a negligible effect on the course of the former Woodham Ferrers to Maldon branch railway line (Asset 2) and the 'Stow Maries Halt' (Asset 3). The potential magnitude of impact on the low heritage value of the bridge would be moderate. Taking into account Paragraph 216 of the NPPF, the potential impact on the bridge should be balanced against the heritage benefit of maintaining the bridge in its original historic function and the benefits of the associated repairs to the bridge. The structural support of the bridge would also result in the wider public benefit of maintaining unrestricted vehicle access across the bridge from Church Lane. The proposed works are therefore considered to conform to the relevant local and national heritage planning policies.

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Maldon District Council Heritage Partnership Agreement: https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20049/heritage_and_conservation/9674/stow_maries_aerodrome_listed_building_heritage_partnership_agreement

Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome: <https://www.stowmaries.org.uk/>

Essex Society for Archaeology and History online:

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Maldon District Council Local Plan online:

https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/7050/planning_policy/9712/approved_local_development_plan_21_july_2017

Appendix A. Plates



Plate A-1. View of north eastern elevation of the bridge



Plate A-2. View of south west elevation of the bridge



Plate A-3. View under the central arch of the bridge looking south west



Plate A-4. View of the decorative brickwork of the central arch of the bridge



Plate A-5. View of the crack in the parapet wall of the bridge



Plate A-6. Detail of vertical fracture in the north eastern elevation spandrel and parapet



Plate A-7. View over the bridge looking south

Appendix B. Essex HER entry for Church Lane Bridge

The bridge is recorded on the Essex HER as 'Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East' (SMR Number: 48628) (Grid Reference: TQ 835 991) (Map Sheet: TQ89NW). It is described as:

Bridge of 3 segmental arches, blue engineering brick.[Bridge 836]. Site of Stow St. Mary Halt (opened in 1928, now a Nature Reserve). The wooden sleeper platform was approached by a path, 104B, inclining down to the W of and from Church Lane from the S. To either side of the bottom of this incline are unmarked concrete and immediately adjacent wooden posts which may mark the access to the Halt. The area in a cutting is now in a woodland strip.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL Good

SITE SIGNIFICANCE Bridge essentially as shown on O.S. map c.1897.

CURRENT STATUS Track line preserved by woodland strip.

RECOMMENDED ACTION Monitor and record any development.

GRADE * (Photos Film C21/DSCF2710 from east, C22/DSCF2711 from west).

Monument Types BRIDGE (Post Medieval - 1540 AD to 1900 AD)

Associated Events The Lost Railways of the Blackwater and Crouch Estuaries

Sources and further reading

DESC TEXT: Kemble J, Gould, S and Garwood, A. 2011. *The Lost Railways of the Blackwater and Crouch Estuaries*.

Related records

48655 Parent of: Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line (Monument)

Images

Appendix C. Essex Historic Environment Record for the Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line

Name: Woodham Ferrers-Maldon railway line

SMR Number: 48655

Type of record: Monument

Grid Reference: TL 831 029

Map Sheet: TL80SW

Parish: CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

MALDON, ESSEX

Summary

Branch line from Woodham Ferrers to Maldon. Opened in 1889 and closed 1953, parts of the route still exist.

Full description

In the 1860s a branch railway line from Maldon to Woodham Ferrers was suggested, but it was not until 1st October 1889, the same date as the completion of the branch to Southend, that the line opened, joining up just east of Woodham Ferrers with the Southminster branch which had opened just four months earlier. The original Maldon terminus, built in 1847/8 possibly by Henry A. Hunt, architect to Eastern Counties Railway, was renamed Maldon East (suffixed Heybridge in 1907) while a new station Maldon West was built in the cutting immediately north of the Maldon to Woodham Mortimer (Chelmsford) road. The track necessitated engineering a long cutting and one tunnel (66 yards, 21metres long under the Chelmsford road) to the southwest of Maldon TL843064, and a long and deep cutting at the approach to and at Cold Norton TL849004. Major engineering works were necessary to bridge the river Chelmer (by a bowstring viaduct) and the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation (by iron bridges). From Maldon West to Maldon East the track was double. Continuity with the lines to Southend and to Witham without the need for reversing the engine was achieved by triangular loops south of Wickford and north of Maldon.

The Woodham Ferrers to Maldon line now provided a passenger link, without changing trains, from Colchester, Witham, Maldon to Southend, but a direct passenger service existed only until 28th February 1895 due to lack of demand. The Wickford south curve and the Maldon north curve to the Witham branch were abolished in that year. In 1914 the number of passenger trains was reduced from seven to five a day. Troop movements were helped by the line but Maldon West was closed for three years during the Great War, reopening in 1919. The Baron's Lane Halt was opened on 10th July 1922 in the hope of attracting passengers from Purleigh. The London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) took ownership from GER in 1923, and reduced the double track between the two Maldon stations to single. On 24th September 1928 the Stow St. Mary Halt was opened south of Stow Maries. "Specials" were run for children's outings to Southend, and, while some significant traffic came in and out of Maldon East from the Witham and Braintree line, the Woodham Ferrers branch was commercially less successful and the passenger service ceased in September 1939.

During the Second World War, trains took troops to the encampment on Osea Island, and served the timber mill making motor torpedo boats and fishing boats at Maldon. With the nationalisation of the railways, the lines were taken over by British Railways (Eastern Region) in 1948. After the war, a goods train between Woodham and Maldon ran once a day until 1st April 1953 when the line closed completely. Maldon West station had been used for warehousing by Marconi's, and the station link to Maldon East was ended finally in 1959 with the rails being lifted the following year. The station at Maldon East continued its link with Witham and Braintree.

The central span of the viaduct bowstring bridge and Lovers Lane footbridge on the Woodham Ferrers line were demolished in May 1965. Maldon West station was demolished in 1969 and light industry developed on the site of the Goods Yard, with reuse of the Goods Shed. The Maldon West tunnel under the Woodham

Mortimer road was blocked at both ends. The line of the Maldon Curve is still identifiable having been replaced by the Maldon West bypass (A414). The Chelmer viaduct demolished in July 1989 was replaced by a steel bridge 6 feet lower for the western road bypass which opened in October 1990. The building of the new town of South Woodham Ferrers from 1970s obliterated the track to Cold Norton and Maldon here. The line of the former track along parts of its length is marked by cuttings, embankments and bridges. Much is now in private hands. The track can be reached only where it crosses roads or has public access. The length of the line was c.8.7 miles.

Kemble J, Gould, S and Garwood, A, 2011, The Lost Railways of the Blackwater and Crouch Estuaries (DESC TEXT). SEX72373.

Monument Types

(Former Type) RAILWAY (Post Medieval to Mid 20th Century - 1889 AD to 1953 AD)

Associated Events

The Lost Railways of the Blackwater and Crouch Estuaries

Sources and further reading

DESC TEXT: Kemble J, Gould, S and Garwood, A. 2011. The Lost Railways of the Blackwater and Crouch Estuaries.

Related records

15072 Parent of: Former Maldon East Railway Station (Listed Building)

48619 Parent of: Terrace of Cottages (3, 5, 7, 9 Station Road), Witham to Maldon dismantled railway (Industrial)

48635 Part of: "The Norton" Public House, formerly "Railway Hotel", Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48622 Part of: "The Railway" Hotel, and Outhouse, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48638 Part of: "The Street" Bridge, Purleigh, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48639 Part of: Baron's Lane Bridge and Halt, Purleigh, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48648 Part of: Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation West Bridge, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)

48628 Part of: Church Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48624 Part of: East Bridge Road, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48625 Part of: East Bridge Road/Bancrofts Road footpath, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

48653 Part of: Engine House, Maldon East Station, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (REVOKED) - see 48618 (Building)

48652 Part of: Goods Shed, Maldon East Station, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)

48641 Part of: Goods Shed, Maldon West, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East Branch Line (Building)

48640 Part of: Hazeleigh Hall cuttings and embankments, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Industrial)

48630 Part of: Honey Pot Lane Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

40942 Part of: Hullbridge Road Level Crossing, Woodham Ferrers (Industrial)

48649 Part of: Langford Curve Embankment, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Industrial)

48632 Part of: Latchingdon Road Bridge, Cold Norton, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

- 48646 Part of: London Road Bridge, Beeleigh Footbridge, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)
- 48650 Part of: Maldon Curve Embankment, Maldon, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Industrial)
- 48651 Part of: Maldon East Station, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (REVOKED as duplicate record) - see 15072 and DEX16364 (Building)
- 48645 Part of: Maldon West Station, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)
- 48642 Part of: Maldon West Tunnel, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East Branch Line (Building)
- 48629 Part of: Pantile Wood Embankment, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Industrial)
- 48637 Part of: Pine Lodge Embankment, Cold Norton, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Industrial)
- 48633 Part of: Railway Cottages (1), Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)
- 48634 Part of: Railway Cottages (2), Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)
- 48654 Part of: Railway Cottages (3, 5, 7, 9 Sattion Road), Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line - REVOKED see 48619 (Building)
- 48623 Part of: Railway Cottages, Hullbridge Road, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)
- 48644 Part of: Railway Cottages, Maldon West (1), Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)
- 48647 Part of: River Chelmer Bridge, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)
- 48631 Part of: St Stephens Road Bridge, Cold Norton, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)
- 48636 Part of: Station House, Cold Norton, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)
- 48643 Part of: Station Master's House, West Maldon, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East branch line (Building)
- 48627 Part of: Stow Maries Culvert, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)
- 40544 Part of: Woodham Ferrers Railway Station (Industrial)
- 48626 Part of: Woodham Road Bridge, Stow Maries, Woodham Ferrers to Maldon East (Building)

Appendix D. Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) 2014 – 2029 policies

Stow Maries is located within Maldon District Council and Essex County Council Local Plan and Strategic Policies. The policies relevant to this assessment include:

Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan 2014 – 2029 was approved by the Secretary of State in July 2017. The following policies are relevant:

Policy D3: Conservation and Heritage Assets

Development proposals that affect a heritage asset (whether designated or non-designated) and / or its setting will be required to:

- 1) Preserve or enhance its special character, appearance, setting – including its streetscape and landscape value - and any features and fabric of architectural or historic interest;*
- 2) Be supported by a Heritage Statement which describes the asset's significance in sufficient detail to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of the heritage asset through the proposed work to it and / of its setting.*

Development proposals which affect a heritage asset will also have to be in accordance with respective national policies and guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Council will give great weight to the asset's conservation. Any harm or loss will require clear and convincing justification.

Where a proposed development would lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, it will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply: the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable use of the site; no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; conservation by grand-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Where a proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Enabling Development

Enabling development which would otherwise conflict with policies in this plan, but which secures the conservation of a heritage assets, will only be allowed where the benefits of the proposal outweigh the dis-benefits of the departure from the policies in this Plan.

Archaeology

Where development might affect geological deposits, archaeology or standing archaeology, an assessment from an appropriate specialist source should be carried out. This assessment must include consultation of the Historic Environment Record. The assessment should be carried out during an early stage of the planning process to identify the likely impact on known or potential heritage assets and assess their significance. The assessment will also provide the basis for potential mitigation strategies, including excavation, in situ preservation, and recording

Policy H4: Effective Use of Land Replacement Dwellings

Planning permission for the replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling will only be granted if:

- 6) The proposal will not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests*

Backland and Infill Development

Backland and infill development will be considered on a site-by-site basis to take into account local circumstances, context and the overall merit of the proposal. Backland and infill development will be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

The proposal will not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests

Extension to residential curtilage into the countryside

Extensions to domestic gardens within the countryside will not normally be permitted. Small, unobtrusive extensions of residential curtilages into the surrounding countryside, which will not adversely affect the character and rural amenities of the site and wider countryside, may be approved where both the following criteria are met: 1) The proposal will not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests; and.....

Policy S1: Sustainable Development

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and will apply the following key principles in policy and decision making:

.....

10) Conserve and enhance the historic environment by identifying the importance of local heritage, and providing protection to heritage assets in accordance with their significance;

Policy S3: Place Shaping

The Garden Suburbs and Strategic Allocations at Maldon, Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch will be planned as high quality, vibrant and distinctive neighbourhoods that will complement and enhance the character of the District and protect and enhance the environmental qualities of the surrounding area. Development proposals for the Garden Suburbs and Strategic Allocations must incorporate the following principles:

.....

4) The historic environment is instrumental in establishing landscape and built character and providing a sense of place and identity, and this should be recognised through the protection, management and enhancement of heritage assets;

Policy D1: Design Quality and Built Environment

All development must:

1) Respect and enhance the character and local context and make a positive contribution in terms of:-

a) Architectural style, use of materials, detailed design features and construction methods.

Innovative design and construction solutions will be considered where appropriate;

b) Height, size, scale, form, massing and proportion;

c) Landscape setting, townscape setting and skylines;

d) Layout, orientation, and density;

e) Historic environment particularly in relation to designated and non-designated heritage assets;

Policy H4: Effective Use of Land Replacement Dwellings

Planning permission for the replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling will only be granted if:

.....

6) The proposal will not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests

Backland and Infill Development

Backland and infill development will be considered on a site-by-site basis to take into account local circumstances, context and the overall merit of the proposal. Backland and infill development will be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

The proposal will not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests

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Heritage Statement: Church Lane Bridge (WFM/836)

approved where both the following criteria are met: 1) The proposal will not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests; and