

Bredfield Neighbourhood plan

Report from historic environment interest group

Background (taken from <http://bredfield.onesuffolk.net/our-village/>)

Bredfield, a “broad clearing” in old English, has evidence of Romano-British and Saxon settlement. The village grew around crossroads where roads from outlying communities to Woodbridge converged, and crossed an ancient track from the river Deben at Melton towards the Roman road at Debach Post.

With several separate medieval manors each claiming a part of the land, Bredfield never owed allegiance to any one great landlord. The existence of many small tenant farmers with land scattered throughout the parish has influenced its development through to the present day. In the late 18th century the lack of a strong landlord permitted the building of small dwellings on the “Lord’s Waste”, the uncultivable field verges around the Green and the Pump, and elsewhere in the village, which technically belonged to the Lord of the Manor. Squatters who could build and occupy a cottage without being stopped by the authorities, could then get the support of the principal inhabitants to plead at the next Manor Court for permission to stay. As anyone evicted from such illegal dwellings would become a charge on the parish rates, most were allowed to remain. About 25 such cottages were built. This fact has influenced the parish’s character and development.

There are 16 listed assets in Bredfield, 12 of which are listed at Grade II and 4 at Grade II* (High House Farm, Bredfield Place, the Stables at Bredfield House and the Parish Church of St Andrew).

The complete list is as follows:

Barn at Bredfield House

Grade II

Blue Barn Farmhouse

Grade II

Bredfield House and Walls of the Walled Garden

Grade II

Bredfield Place

*Grade II**

Castle Public House

Grade II

Chapel Farmhouse

Grade II

Church Cottage

Grade II

Church of St Andrew

*Grade II**

Dewells Farmhouse

Grade II

FitzGerald Cottage

Grade II

High House

*Grade II**

Lords Waste

Grade II

Moat Farmhouse

Grade II

The Old Rectory

Grade II

The Rest

Grade II

Tudor Cottage

Grade II

There are also other non-listed assets and features within the village and this interest group has considered and recorded these in this report.

The future

The group was formed as part of the Bredfield Neighbourhood Plan with the following aims:

- To develop an awareness of Bredfield's historic environment and note all assets, including archaeological sites, historic buildings, landscapes and sites of local value, and to clarify the key conservation issues linked with these.
- To also consider how the village's character might be maintained or even improved, with any future development being appropriately and even innovatively designed and sympathetically integrated.

The small clusters of existing housing and gradual incremental growth of the village would indicate that large scale development would be undesirable. However small scale interesting architecture such as the recent new build next to the church could be a successful addition and would maintain the image of Bredfield as a dynamic and interesting village.

Village development in the future should also conserve and value the natural environment, and this is addressed by another interest group within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Methodology

This interest group is made up of Karen Bowe, Val Norrington and Ann Pilgrim. It has met on two occasions so far and members have also liaised by phone and email. Each has completed individual research to support their findings. In the course of this research there has been consultation with the Society of Friends, Belinda Gray (Bredfield House), Anne Ackerley (hedgerow survey), John Newman (archaeologist) and with Paul Read (Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group).

Issues identified

The interest group has identified features of notable value to the village community. Listed assets already have protection, but there are other features that the group considers worthy of note in the Neighbourhood Plan. These are:

1. Hedgerows and trees

There are several significant boundary hedges and trees around Bredfield. The boundary is important as it defines the village. Bredfield's boundary has remained much the same since medieval times (see Shire book – Discovering Parish Boundaries) The boundary trees are a historic asset as some of the trees are as much as 100 years old. The trees were generally oaks and there are around 12 trees still standing. These have often been pollarded (group to clarify precise location of these). The hedgerows are also both environmentally and historically important, as was identified in a hedgerow survey undertaken in the village (report and evidence kept in village hall).

2. Orchards

There is a 19th century orchard on Foxburrow Farm. Paul Read (STOG) confirmed this and the orchard is registered on STOG's historic database.

A new orchard has also been planted on former glebe land (Bredfield Jubilee Meadow and Orchard), using traditional Suffolk tree varieties.

3. Ponds and moats

It is believed that there was a pond or moat in the grounds of Bredfield House although this feature is not mentioned in the listing of the property. This may have been a canal garden and VN is researching this further. KB will ask the current resident Belinda Gray whether she has any relevant photos to support this.

There was a medieval moated hall site on private farmland near to the boundary with Dallinghoo (now part of Grahame Taylor's farm). This is a valuable site, not only to the village but also to the local archaeological department.

There is a pond that is just in Dallinghoo, which was the pound pond where stray animals were kept.

4. Archaeological sites

There is some evidence of a high status building having been situated on land near to Potash Corner. Stones have been found there and there is some documentation in the county's historic environment record. John Newman at SCC has further information (VN). The field next to this site is prone to flooding and is understood to have been used as osier beds.

A Bronze Age axe head was found near to Blue Barn and this is kept and logged at the museum in Ipswich. The track at Blue Barn is likely to have been part of a Roman road from Debach.

5. Quaker burial ground

This land belongs to the Quakers and is registered to them. Approximately 235 bodies were buried there. It would be useful to have this special site identified in some way, as a site of social and historical interest to the village. VN has been in touch with the trustees and they will raise the matter at their next meeting. However sensitivity and deference must be shown to the owners in this matter.

6. Buildings

The lord's waste houses in Bredfield should be considered as a group of significant interest. The Manor Court books held at the Record Office will identify these and the interest group will investigate this further. There is no evidence of a manorial house in the village however. A definition of Lord's Waste is included as supporting evidence.

Primrose Cottages should be included as buildings with group value, as should the houses around the village pump and the area around the Green (Green Farm).

The school house and the teacher's house are significant local landmarks, if not of particular architectural importance.

Queen Bess cottage was historically a miller's house and then a beer house. It is therefore of some social interest.

7. Green space

The village green is owned by the parish council. It is believed to be medieval and is marked and named on J. Hodkinson's map of Suffolk of 1783.

Supporting evidence

- Map showing listed assets
- Map showing non-listed features
- Location photos and details of some historic features
- Definition of Lord's Waste
- Photos – boundary trees, canal garden (waiting to hear from Belinda Gray)

Conclusion

While not a traditionally 'beautiful' village, there are many features within Bredfield of historical significance which should be noted and acknowledged when changes to the physical environment are proposed. The social fabric of a mixed community that has existed since medieval times (and evidence of settlement before this) presents an interesting and attractive story of a working Suffolk village. This mixed community still exists today and will hopefully be retained in the future.

Remaining objectives

To complete research as yet unfinished with a view to finalising a report for inclusion with Bredfield's Neighbourhood Plan.