



2024-25 has been an eventful year in the Historic Environment Team at Place Services! Our geographical client base has expanded whilst our types of project have also become more diverse.

This year I wanted to produce a short document that celebrates the team and what they have achieved. This document forms an outline account of the work we have undertaken in 2024-25, including our core output of development management support to local planning authorities, and the variety of projects we have managed and completed.

During 2024-25 we aimed to make positive impacts on the historic environment through our syllabus of conservation courses and our many projects assisting local authorities with their own heritage assets.

One of the best aspects of working at Place Services is our team culture. Postpandemic, we have made efforts as a team to ensure the work environment remains welcoming, inclusive and enjoyable.

The biggest change this year has been the opening of a new office at Cressing Temple Barns, giving the Historic Environment team a fitting second home in the Grade II listed farmhouse. I have personally found use of the site to be a welcome change, and the tranquil surroundings have had a positive impact on my own wellbeing.

Some of the most enjoyable events of the year are our team away days, as well as our practice-wide away day which includes Place Services' Built and Natural Environment Teams.

In March 2024 we were treated to a tour of Sutton Hoo by National Trust Archaeologist Angus Wainwright. It was a fascinating experience to learn about the Trust's work at the site and interesting to discuss what I term the 'Marmite viewing tower' (see below).

We had a technical away day in August to Copped Hall in Epping, where architect Alan Cox gave us a tour of the property. The journey the trust has taken in restoring and conserving the building was inspiring and an excellent example of a project which, to many people, would have appeared completely overwhelming at the outset. We used the afternoon to discuss the future of Place Services and how we develop further as a team.





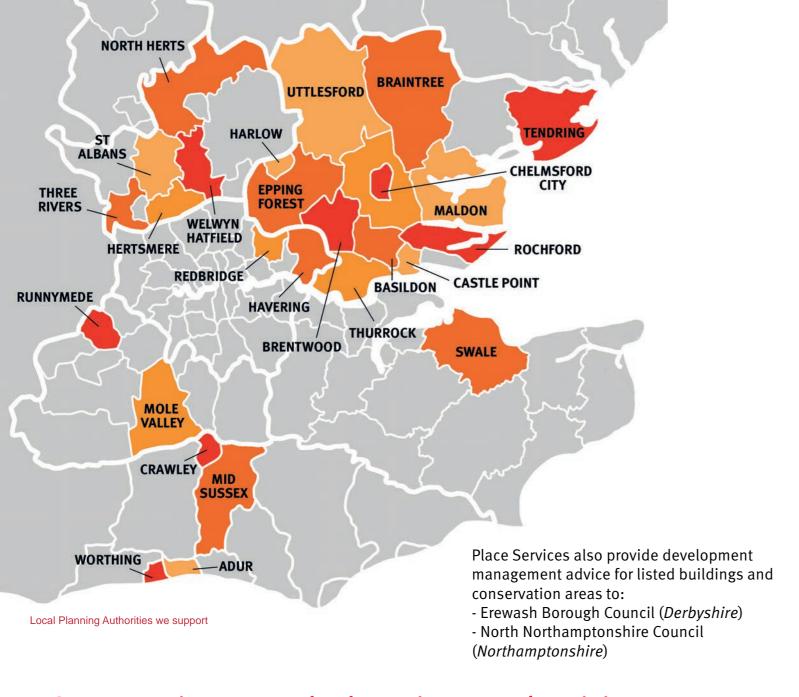
This was a fantastic (and very wet!) experience to enjoy as a team.

To conclude the year, in early December we ventured to London for a tour of the Roman Amphitheatre below London's Guildhall. We then took a Thames Clipper to Battersea Power Station, where architect David Hills captivated us with his knowledge and experience around the conservation of this iconic structure.

I hope you find the following pages to be an interesting outline of the team's work in 2024-25. As I reflect on the year, I continue to be proud to be part of our team of dedicated individuals, who form one of the largest public sector historic environment teams in the country. As a 'zero-budgeted' team, I am also pleased we can complete our annual operations in a financially sustainable manner, providing an income to the public purse whilst having a positive impact on the historic environment.

Tim Murphy
Historic Environment Manager

Sutton Hoo viewing tower



Supporting Local Planning Authorities

The core work of the team continues to be the provision of development management advice to local planning authorities. Our Built Heritage Consultants provide extensive Conservation Officer support to districts and boroughs across Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Derbyshire, Kent, London and the East Midlands.

The quality of our advice is recognised in appeal decisions. Success is not quantified by dismissal but rather the agreement with our advice by the planning inspectorate. We have achieved 100% success in the three hearings attended in 2024 and 95% success (which were also dismissals) of around 50 written representation appeals for our local authority clients. The team had an unusually quiet year of public inquiries in 2024, although our specialists have been providing expert witness services to councils in early 2025.

Our Historic Environment Consultants provide archaeological planning advice to most Essex districts, as well as Thurrock Unitary Authority, St Albans, Adur and Worthing, Crawley and Reigate, and Mid Sussex.

Planning recommendations made by the archaeological team on a wide range of planning applications have resulted in numerous archaeological excavations taking place in 2024. The largest project with a fieldwork component is the Lower Thames Crossing project, with over 3000 trenches excavated north of the Thames. More than 70 concentrations of archaeological deposits were identified, many of which will require open area excavation if the development proceeds.

Large scale excavations in advance of housing developments in Chelmsford have identified important Late Iron Age and Roman landscapes, including settlements and burials. In Great Chesterford, excavations have identified a Roman settlement and burials overlaid by a Saxon settlement. The Saxon settlement is particularly interesting as although Great Chesterford has an extensive Saxon cemetery, it was not known until now where any of the occupants of the cemetery may have been living.



Iron Age burial site found in Little Waltham. Photo credit: Archaeology South East



Sopwell Nunnery, St Albans

Local Plans

Throughout 2024 and 2025 we have undertaken many Heritage Impact Assessments for local authorities to support their Local Plan preparations.

St Albans City and District Council

We produced 20 high-level Heritage Impact Assessments and five standalone detailed Heritage Impact Assessment reports to consider the potential effects of site allocations on both built heritage and below ground archaeology. The sites varied in size and scale, ranging from 15 dwellings up to the strategic, large-scale Hemel Garden Community site which crosses over into Dacorum District Council. This allocation was the most complex of the standalone studies as it contained five separate allocations which form the garden community site. The Council has recently consulted on its Reg 19 Local Plan, of which Place Services' HIAs formed part of its evidence base.

Colchester Tendring Borders Garden Community

We prepared a Heritage Impact Assessment as part of the evidence base for the cross-border Garden Community, which is part in Colchester, part in Tendring. Our report considered the heritage assets identified as being affected by the Allocation. Further to this, we provided additional consideration of mitigation and enhancement measures, as was requested by Historic England. The report referred to the illustrative Strategic Framework Masterplan which supports the draft policy position within the Development Plan Development (DPD) Regulation 19 Consultation.

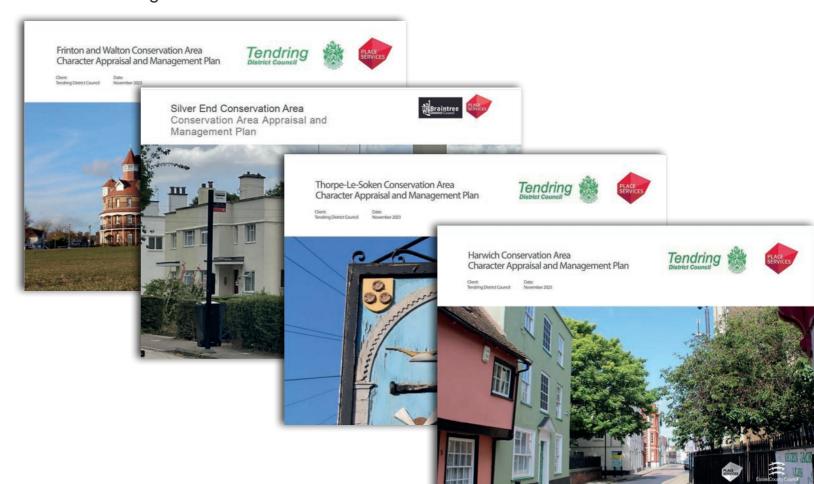
Heritage Impact Assessments

For a number of other local planning authorities we have been assisting with early identification of proposed site allocations which will require a Heritage Impact Assessment. This has comprised a sifting exercise, in which we reviewed the proposed allocations to understand which sites would require a Heritage Impact Assessment. From this we were able to categorise the type of HIA needed and whether the Allocation would need a high-level assessment or detailed study. This considered both built heritage and archaeological assets.

Conservation Areas

In 2024 we prepared Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans across Essex and further afield. Highlights have included:

- After beginning a project to update a series of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in Tendring in 2023, we have now taken many of these through public consultation and they have since been adopted. We continued to support Tendring with a further six appraisals in 2025. The public consultation events have all taken place successfully with final amendments to the documents now being completed.
- This year we have supported Castle Point to prepare an appraisal and management plan for South Benfleet Conservation Area, including support at public consultation. We look forward to the document being adopted in 2025.
- We have also assisted Braintree with the preparation of documents for Silver End and Halstead. The Silver End CAAMP went to public consultation in October and was voted unanimously for adoption in December 2024, while consultation for Halstead will open in the new year.
- Outside of Essex, we've recently drafted an appraisal for the Abbotsley
 Conservation Area in Huntingdonshire, which will go through public consultation
 in due course. Over in Hertsmere we have taken the South Mimms CAAMP to
 public consultation, while in Buckinghamshire we are preparing appraisals for
 Buckingham and Winslow.



Supporting Essex County Council's Heritage Assets

Essex County Council owns a large number of heritage assets which are either part of the operational estate or are no longer in use and in our custodianship. In 2024 Place Services completed an assessment of all ECC-owned heritage assets to consider their current situation and sustainable conservation. In addition, Place Services have been assisting departments across ECC to manage their heritage assets and help to secure appropriate changes within the historic environment.





Stock Windmill

We are pleased to have worked on all five of Essex County Council's watermills and windmills. Place Services have now completed condition surveys and repair schedules for mills at Mountnessing, Stock, Finchingfield, Alderford and Beeleigh, working with CARE engineers and millwrights. Listed building consent will be secured for a significant repair scheme at Stock windmill, which will include the removal and repair of the sails and cap.

The county's road infrastructure includes a number of heritage assets and many listed bridges. Place Services have been supporting Essex Highways to assess the significance of these features and form an appropriate conservation approach to secure relevant permissions and consents.



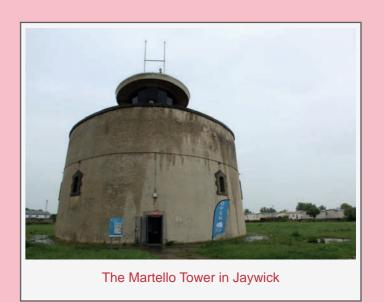
North Bridge

Many Essex County Council libraries and schools are located in listed buildings and conservation areas. Place Services provide heritage consultancy support to establish appropriate maintenance and repair strategies for these structures to promote their sustainable conservation.



Great Bardfield School

ECC owns a number of scheduled monuments, some of which are detailed on the following pages. Place Services recently secured consent for roof repairs at Jaywick Martello Tower, a proposal which required a bespoke approach due to its unique construction.



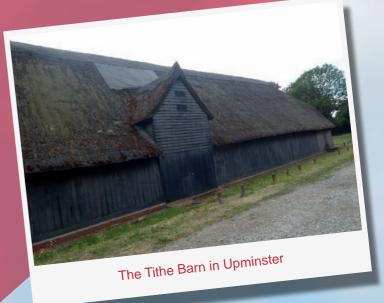
Feasibility and Heritage Masterplanning

In 2024-25 Place Services undertook several feasibility studies on a range of heritage assets. In addition to providing heritage consultancy support, we have used our network of associates to pull together and manage teams comprised of AABC architects, CARE engineers, quantity surveyors, business planners, and a diverse range of environmental specialists and disciplines. Our multi-disciplinary teams have worked collaboratively to explore opportunities for sympathetic sustainable uses for a variety of sites.

A feasibility study for Coalhouse Fort scheduled monument concluded in March 2025. This project was managed by Place Services on behalf of Thurrock Council, after we had secured funds from National Highways for this multi-disciplinary study. Place Services brought together a team comprising architects, engineers, ecologists, land contamination specialists, flood risk consultants, quantity surveyors and heritage consultants. The project focussed on specific areas of the site that could be viably addressed to get public use of the fort, acting as a catalyst for a wider scheme of conservation and repair. The project has already resulted in positive steps, with the formation of advisory groups and further funding applications.

Place Services completed a feasibility study for the Wickham Bishops Timber Trestle Viaduct. This included a costed repair scheme, a full archaeological record, and consideration of how the structure may be conserved and used in the future.

Upminster Tithe Barn scheduled monument is a significant site which is currently being rethatched with funds from National Highways. Place Services completed an initial high level feasibility study for the London Borough of Havering to consider the future of this site and how it may be suitably used.

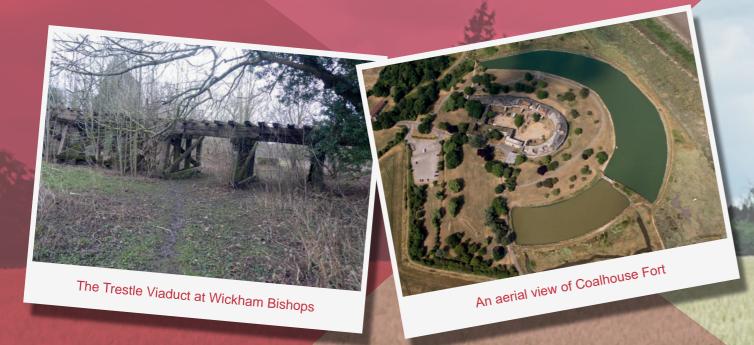


Conservation Management Plans

Place Services have undertaken several CMPs in recent years to promote and manage sensitive change to heritage assets.

In 2024 Place Services completed a Conservation Management Plan for the Graded II* listed Thaxted Windmill, which is on the Heritage at Risk Register. The Conservation Management Plan supported the windmill's National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for the repair to the building and its millwrighting machinery, improving visitor access, involving volunteers and engaging locals and visitors.

The bid was successful, with £1.3 million being granted to bring the windmill back into working order.



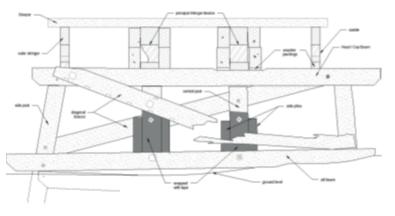
Historic Building Recording

Within our team we have a number of experienced buildings archaeologists. They provide a variety of expertise both in terms of recording techniques and the typology of buildings they have worked on. Our schemes of archaeological building recording are archived with the Archaeological Data Service and can be <u>accessed online</u>.

Trestle Viaduct

A programme of archaeological building recording was undertaken on the Trestle Viaduct at Wickham Bishops, a scheduled monument. This project has provided a comprehensive and analytical record of the structure to support the design and management of any future conservation and repair schemes.

Recognised as a heritage asset of high significance, the viaduct was surveyed at Level 4, the most detailed level as defined by Historic England. This encompassed a survey and analysis of the structure, architectural details, and archaeological evidence. The findings from this investigation provide a thorough understanding of the viaduct's significance, derived from its historic use within a regional railway network and its construction techniques, which are of architectural importance.



A diagram of the viaduct's construction



Church of St Peter and St Paul, Birch

Place Services undertook a scheme of archaeological building recording of the Grade II listed church of St Peter and St Paul, Birch. This was completed at the request of the Diocese in advance of the planned demolition of the church.

The recording was carried out to Historic England Level 4 standard to provide a comprehensive record of the church prior to its demolition. The building was designed by the architect S.S. Teulon in the Neo-Gothic style and constructed in 1850, replacing an earlier medieval church as part of the nationwide "Victorian Restoration" being undertaken at this time. The building contains several original elements, including the reredos at the eastern end of the chancel in Teulon's design. These were all described and documented within our report.

St John's Green School

Place Services undertook a Historic Building recording of the northern boundary wall at St John's Green School prior to a programme of repair and stabilisation.

The recording was undertaken to inform our understanding of the phasing and construction of the boundary wall, which was unexpectedly exposed during a recent programme of foliage removal. The recording created an archive record of the wall prior to repair and stabilisation works, which will be submitted with a forthcoming planning application.

The wall was found to contain five different phases, ranging from medieval to the late-nineteenth century. An extensive amount of Roman building material was within the structure's makeup, likely salvaged and re-used in the medieval period from the nearby Roman town and circus.

We supplemented the recording by commissioning a programme of archaeological test-pitting, allowing the foundations of the wall to be examined. This informed both the recording and the upcoming stabilisation works.





Hedingham Castle

A Historic Building Recording of various structural elements at Hedingham Castle was undertaken prior to a programme of approved repair and consolidation works. This was required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent to provide an archive record of the building elements.

As well as conventional recording techniques, a programme of photogrammetry was undertaken on various elements of the castle. The elements recorded include brick buttresses of the Tudor bridge, windows, window alcoves and wallheads of the Norman keep, and the remains of the Tudor brick tower recently uncovered to the south-west of the ringwork.

The programme of work undertaken related to several structural elements and historic periods of Hedingham Castle. Each of these investigations has furthered our knowledge of the castle's history, whilst also raising some research questions that could be answered by future archaeological work.

Public Engagement

Weald Country Park Excavation

In July 2024, a two-week outreach excavation was embarked upon to uncover and date the former Weald Hall in Weald Country Park. The excavation, funded by National Highways' Lower Thames Crossing project, was undertaken to investigate whether the location of the medieval remains of Weald Hall could be identified. For hundreds of years the hall sat within impressive grounds, largely based on an eighteenth-century design that had been altered and extended over time.

The dig was an opportunity for local residents to take part in an archaeological excavation. Over 20 volunteers were trained by Oxford Archaeology in excavation techniques, finds processing and archaeological interpretation, and some were even inspired to begin a career in archaeology!



Where we expected to find part of the Tudor stable yard and laundry, instead we uncovered a stone-lined sunken bath of probable Georgian origins, complete with steps and a stone seat. Alongside the bath, a toothbrush made of bone was also recovered.

These surprising finds were featured on BBC news, capturing the imagination of local audiences and TV viewers alike.

Lower Thames Community Archaeology

Over the last year, we have continued to deliver a busy programme of events across the south of Essex to engage the local community in the archaeology, geology, and heritage of the Lower Thames Crossing corridor. The programme was funded by National Highways.

Five workshops were facilitated for local interest groups active in south Essex, which were well attended. These workshops aimed to teach research skills, such as accessing archives, finds identification, and building recording.

In addition, there has been a range of activities for members of the public. Young people and carers at Thurrock Play Network created the amazing 'Thames Through Time' banner, which was inspired by their favourite artefacts.

Other events have included the exploration of prehistoric finds and mammoth making at Grays Library, and a number of walks and lectures highlighting the area's heritage. These have covered topics such as the military history of the Thames, including visits to Coalhouse and Tilbury forts, riverine archaeology, and the heritage of the local Bata Shoe Company.













A year in numbers...

890
equivalent hours of CPD
delivered

170

total attendees

5/5

rating given to our tutors by attendees



Traditional Building Skills and Conservation Courses

Thank you to everyone who attended one of our Traditional Building Skills and Conservation Courses in 2024-25. In addition to running some of our most popular courses again, this year we've also explored the topic of timber-framed buildings and methods of repair and conservation. In response to the success of these courses, we arranged an exciting opportunity to visit a timber conservation workshop and observe the carpenters in action.

"Excellent course, interesting content and great setting. Tutor was engaging, passionate and knowledgeable. Would recommend to others."

Most courses are held at the historic site of Cressing Temple Barns, giving attendees the opportunity to tour the site and put their new skills into action. We have many courses planned for the next year, including the return of popular courses such as *Bats and Historic Buildings*, *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments*, and *House History: Researching & Understanding Your Historic Building*. We will also be introducing a range of new lectures and practical workshops on topics such as geoarchaeology, measured surveys, and public inquiry training for developments affecting heritage assets.

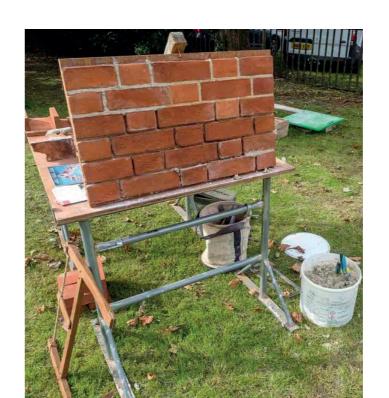
For all the latest news about our courses, please email us at conservation.courses@essex.gov.uk to join our mailing list.

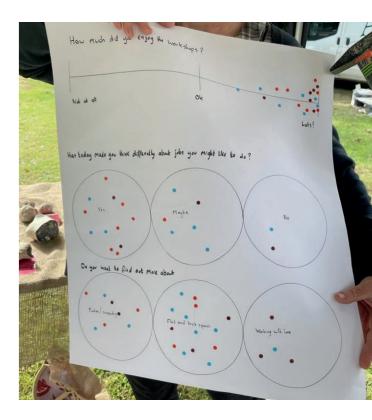
Heritage Skills Workshops

We were invited to create a bespoke heritage workshop and community open day at St Andrew's Church in Soham. This formed part of their 'In the Footsteps of St Felix' project, which is funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

Our team worked closely with the project lead to create a traditional heritage skills workshop for local students in Years 10 and 11. We were keen to showcase some of the different jobs available in the heritage sector and the career opportunities these trades can offer to the young students. Attendees had the chance to gain hands-on experience and speak to passionate experts in heritage crafts such as lime plastering, flint knapping, timber framing, and bricklaying.

All these skills are in short supply, with some included on the Red List of endangered crafts.





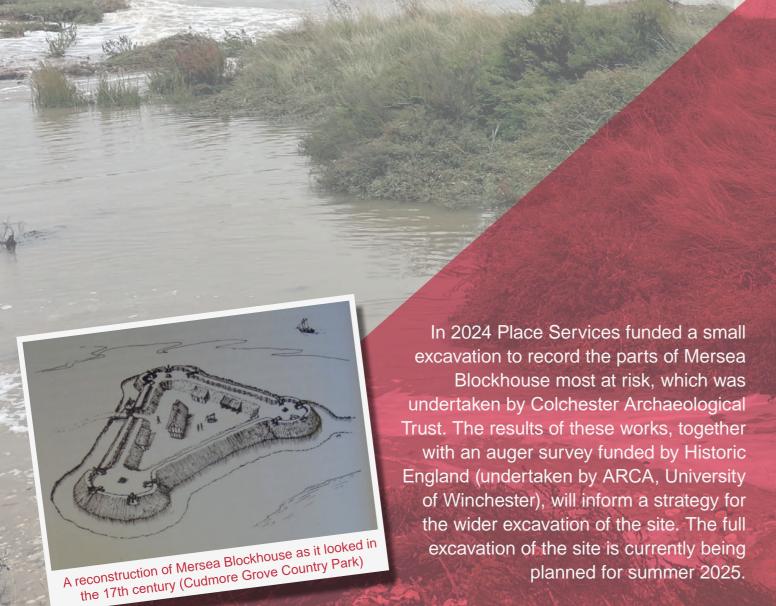
The day provided the students with the chance to gain hands-on experience and try new skills. We hope that it has inspired some to consider a career in the heritage sector. This event format has been trialled successfully elsewhere in the country and has led to an apprentice being taken on.

The event was coordinated by our team at Place Services and supported by SPAB. We were also delighted to be included on the panel 'Meeting the Heritage Craft Skills Shortage Head On' at the New Ideas for Old Buildings: SPAB-STBA Conference 2024, where we discussed the event and its outcomes.

Click here to view a short film of the event on YouTube.

Investment in the Historic Environment

Mersea Blockhouse is located on the coast in Cudmore Grove, an Essex County Council Country Park. The site, a scheduled monument, was built c1543 as part of Henry VIII's extensive programme of coastal military defence. In recent years the earthwork has started to be incrementally eroded by the sea and is considered at immediate risk of loss. Place Services is working in partnership with Historic England to record as much of the monument as possible before its ultimate loss to the sea.





The Historic Environment Record contains detailed information about archaeological finds and sites, monuments, historic buildings and landscapes across Essex. It is used to inform planning and other land management decisions, to support heritage-led regeneration, and for research, advancing our knowledge and understanding of our past.

In 2024 the maintenance of the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) became a statutory duty, reflecting its importance for planning and regeneration in the county, and as a valuable source of information for people interested in Essex's rich heritage. Place Services is investing £300,000 with support from Historic England to enhance the Essex HER in a two-year project that will radically improve access to information on the heritage of the county for public benefit.

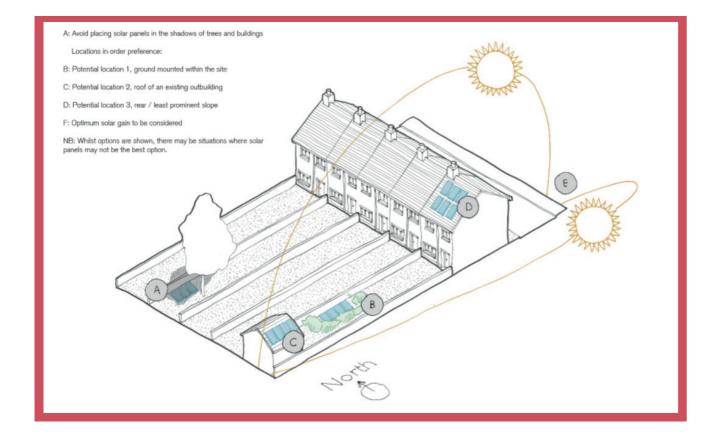
Our new team of Assistant Historic Environment Record Officers, with expert guidance from Alice Cattermole Heritage Consultancy, will systematically enhance over 80,000 existing records to a new standard issued by Historic England, the government's advisory body on the historic environment.

Historic England will also be giving financial support to the project, and in a major boost to individuals and community groups who want to explore the historic environment of their area, the team will be adding at least 20,000 new records ahead of the creation of a website bringing public access to the information. As a result of this investment, decisions on housing growth, the location of new infrastructure, and changes to land management across Essex will be informed and guided by the record, helping to ensure the sustainability of future development in the county.

For more information about our HER services and to browse the existing summary database, please <u>visit our website</u>.

Climate Change and the Historic Environment

In recent years, climate change has rightly been brought to the forefront of the agendas of all councils. As a team we want to provide the best advice to sustainably conserve our heritage assets, as well as to help local planning authorities and the public improve the efficiency of their properties. We aim to support councils and promote good practice, and over 2024 we have been involved in a number of conferences, seminars and CPD provision on the topic.



Our team authored the Climate Change and the Historic Environment section of the Essex Design Guide. This guide is a resource which is bespoke to Essex's vernacular and responds to its stock of historic buildings and spaces. The guidance focuses on how improvements can be made to historic buildings to reduce their carbon impact whilst retaining the integrity of historic structures. You can view the Design Guide online, where information is regularly updated to reflect changing policy and guidance.

We are currently working on a number of district-specific climate change design guides which consider the retrofit of listed buildings. The team are currently finalising guidance for Test Valley Borough Council, which should be published in the near future.

Interpretation Panels

The Historic Environment Team at Place Services have designed and installed a number of interpretation boards in recent months. The design of the boards is a collaborative process considering content, audience, accessibility, and location.

We were pleased to have installed two interpretation boards at Beaumont Quay in Tendring District. The provision of these boards at the Scheduled Monument was a good conclusion to the repair works which had taken place to both the historic quayside and limekiln.

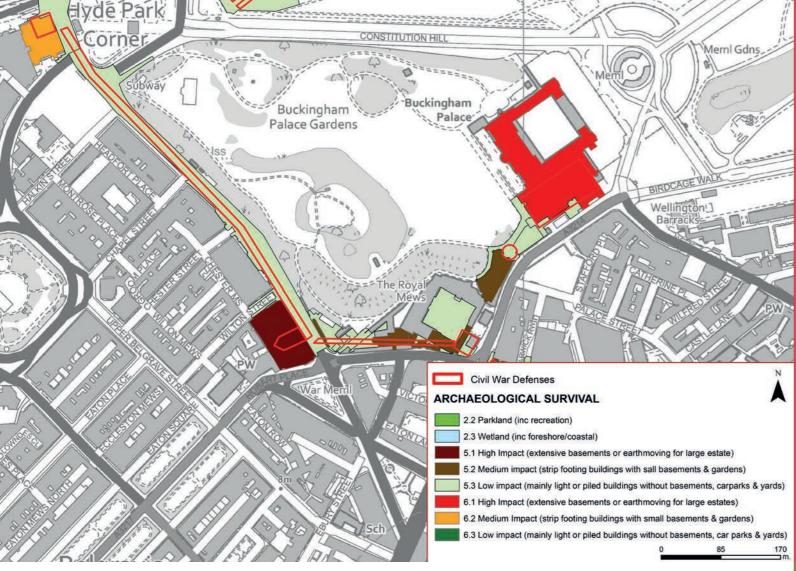




Place Services commissioned an artist to complete an interpretation painting of the site as it would have been at the end of the nineteenth century. The painting was based on the historic maps and photographic evidence, as well as oral histories we were fortunate to obtain from the local population.

In 2024 we obtained Scheduled Monument Consent for a new interpretation board on ECC land adjacent to Pleshey Castle and this is hoped to be installed in 2025.

We are currently finalising an interpretation board for Norsey Woods - this is the final phase of a Scheduled Monument Management Project funded through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.



Mapping the Civil War in London

Place Services provided digital mapping expertise to Mills Whipp Projects, who are currently undertaking Historic England-funded research on the defences of London during the English Civil War.

The Civil War saw the construction of a number of small forts and protective trenches called 'Lines of Communication' to protect London from imminent attack by the King's forces. A city map produced in 1738 by George Vertue gave a broad idea of where the defences were located, but repeated excavations have established the details were inaccurate. This project seeks to identity a more precise location of the defences.

Our involvement comprised of mapping defence lines and assessing their archaeological potential, recording where they may have been disturbed by below ground works, and identifying areas of waterlogging where organic remains may survive. The digital mapping builds on a methodology developed by Place Services when mapping the archaeological deposits and potential in the Whitehall and Westminster area for GLAAS. The figure above is an archaeological survival assessment we produced for the Lines of Communication and forts in the Buckingham Palace area.

Aerial Mapping and Reconnaissance

There have been a number of archaeological Aerial Investigation and Mapping (AIM) projects completed this year, with the primary aim of informing future archaeological mitigation. Accurate mapping on GIS of archaeological cropmark features forms an important part of the archaeological mitigation process and is critical to determining an appropriate field evaluation programme which will accurately define the significance of the surviving archaeological deposits. A mapping project ahead of a programme of trial trenching in areas adjacent to Beth Chatto Gardens assessed all available aerial photographs and lidar data. Non-designated heritage assets mapped for this project included the continuation of a possible Roman road, along with pits, boundaries and enclosures that had not been previously recorded.

The Historic England-funded Essex aerial reconnaissance project continued during the summer of 2024, with 17 hours of flying completed. The focus of the project continued to be the recording of archaeological cropmark sites, with over 50 HER sites recorded. All aspects of the historic environment were recorded, including the monitoring of several Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens across the county. While weather conditions were not ideal for the formation of cropmarks this year, a probable Roman settlement site was clearly visible in sugar beet.

To find out more about our aerial photography services, please visit our website.



Cressing Temple

Over the course of 2024, the Place Services Historic Environment Team have been undertaking several projects at Cressing Temple. The ECC-owned site (also where we hold our courses!) contains a chronology of significant features and buildings which is reflected in its status as a scheduled monument.

Working with a thatcher, Place Services secured Scheduled Monument Consent in 2024 for the rethatching of the eighteenth-century cart lodge which stores significant historic agricultural equipment.

In early 2025 we secured consent for the re-roofing of the Wheat and Barley Barns. The barns are of national significance, derived from their thirteenth-century date of construction and historic association with the Knights Templar. They are considered among the oldest timber-framed barns in the country and some of the few surviving Templar buildings, making them an important archaeological resource of this vernacular construction.

Place Services worked with CARE engineers, roofing consultants and a quantity surveyor to produce a schedule of repair and secure a detailed consent application for the re-roofing and structural repair works. The re-roofing of the barn had been identified as a requirement due to the deterioration of the tiles and torching. The fabric falling into the interior has been temporarily mitigated by the erection of hessian sheets which permitted the site to remain open to the public. However, these unfortunately obscure views of the significant internal timber structure.

We hope to enjoy watching the works take place on site from our new Cressing Temple satellite office in the listed farmhouse.





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