

Date: September 2021

# MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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[www.maldon.gov.uk](http://www.maldon.gov.uk)



The Owner  
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To all the owners and residents of Woodfield Cottages:

## Woodfield Cottages Conservation Area Appraisal and Local Listed Building Consent Order

It is my pleasure to write to you about some initiatives proposed by Maldon District Council to help improve the character and appearance of Woodfield Cottages.

Built in 1873 as homes for the employees of Bentall's Agricultural Works, they are a pioneering example of *in-situ* concrete construction. Remarkably, until 1918, the cottages had flat roofs and were known as the 'Flat Tops'. Despite designation of the cottages as grade II listed buildings in 1971, they have suffered extensive unsympathetic alterations, many of which are unauthorised. Following a review of the cottages in 2019, Historic England concluded that they still merit their grade II listed status, but there is a recognition that proactive measures are needed to work positively with owners to restore the area's historic character.

The first initiative we are proposing is the designation of the cottages as a conservation area. This is because it is not just the cottages and outhouses which are important; the lanes, gardens and boundary treatments which surround the original buildings altogether comprise a distinct historic area the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. As the cottages are already listed buildings, the creation of a conservation area will impose very few additional planning restrictions since most types of development already require listed building consent or planning permission. Please find enclosed a document entitled *Woodfield Cottages Conservation Area Proposal and Character Appraisal* which describes what is special about the area, the opportunities for enhancement, and the implications of conservation area status. Designation of a conservation area would create the opportunity for Maldon District Council to enter into a Conservation Area Partnership Agreement with Historic England, through which grant funding could be made available to owners for works which enhance the character of the area. Woodfield Cottages must first be designated as a conservation area to qualify for the grant funding.

The second initiative we have developed is the *Woodfield Cottages Local Listed Building Consent Order*, of which a draft version is enclosed. You will be aware that any works of alteration to a listed building require Listed Building Consent from the local planning authority. Such applications are free of charge but require a certain degree of paperwork, the preparation of architectural drawings and usually take 8 weeks to determine. What a Local Listed Building Consent Order does is grant automatic consent for selected types of alteration, if they are undertaken in accordance with an approved specification. This will make it easier for owners of Woodfield Cottages to carry out sympathetic and restorative alterations and to address enforcement issues, by reducing the bureaucratic requirements associated with obtaining Listed Building Consent. To be clear, there will be no obligation for owners to undertake the works specified in the Local Listed Building Consent Order. Alternative alterations may still be authorised through the usual Listed Building Consent process. Please note that the order is in draft form and automatic consent for the specified works will not come into effect until the order is formally adopted.

2023 will be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the cottages were built. Maldon District Council hopes that with the proposed initiatives in place, this anniversary could be celebrated with the cottages facing brighter prospects. We recognise that the success of the proposed measures will rely upon the enthusiasm and cooperation of residents. We hope you will agree with us that this is a unique opportunity to improve the character of the area and add value to your property.

We would welcome any feedback or suggestions you have in relation to these proposals. For your assistance, please see below a questionnaire. I would be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and email it to me by **XXXXX**

Yours faithfully,

Tim Howson  
Conservation and Heritage Specialist  
Maldon District Council

## Questionnaire

Would you welcome the designation of a Woodfield Cottages Conservation Area, bearing in mind the opportunity it would create for grant funding towards enhancement work?

Do you agree with the opportunities for enhancement identified on pages 25 and 26 of the conservation area proposal?

Do you consider there to be any further opportunities for enhancement which have not been identified in the conservation area proposal? If so, please describe these further enhancement opportunities.

If grants became available for some of the enhancement opportunities identified in the conservation area proposal, would you be interested in applying for a grant? What enhancement work would you be most keen to undertake and how soon would you hope to do it?

Do you have any historical information or old photographs which would improve the conservation area character appraisal?

Would you welcome the adoption of the Local Listed Building Consent Order?

Are there any ways in which you think the Local Listed Building Consent Order could be improved?

If you would prefer to receive future information on these initiatives by email, please supply your email address below. The email address provided will only be used to communicate with you about Woodfield Cottages.