

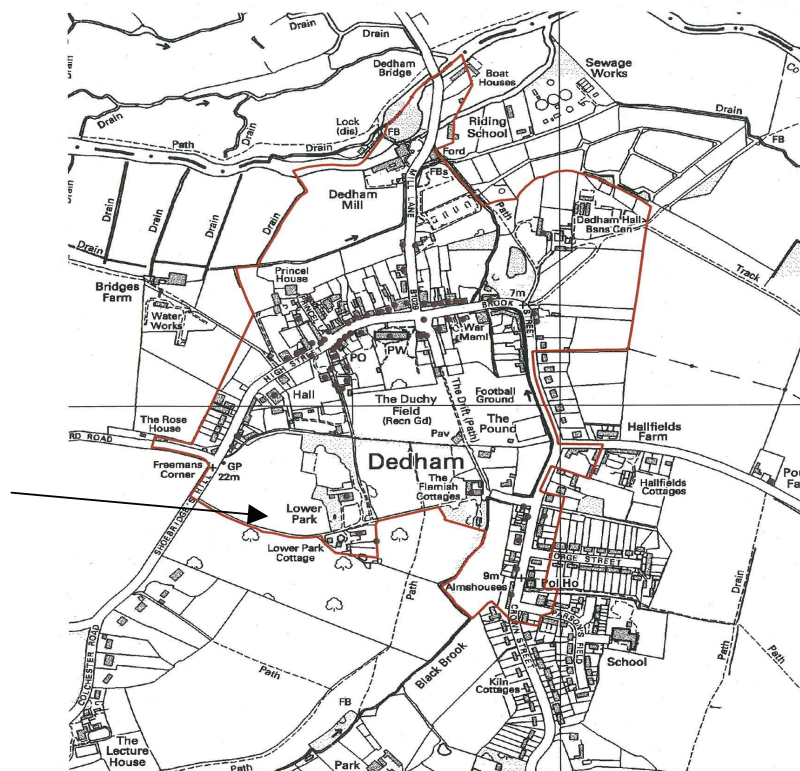
DEDHAM, LOWER PARK. Statement of significance

Background

This report documents an application for equestrian use, erection of a stable, and construction of a swimming pool, at Lower Park, a grade II listed building just to the south of the town of Dedham (Colchester Borough application reference 101541). Planning Policy Statement 5 *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5) recommends that local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected by applications for planning permission or listed building consent.

Dedham

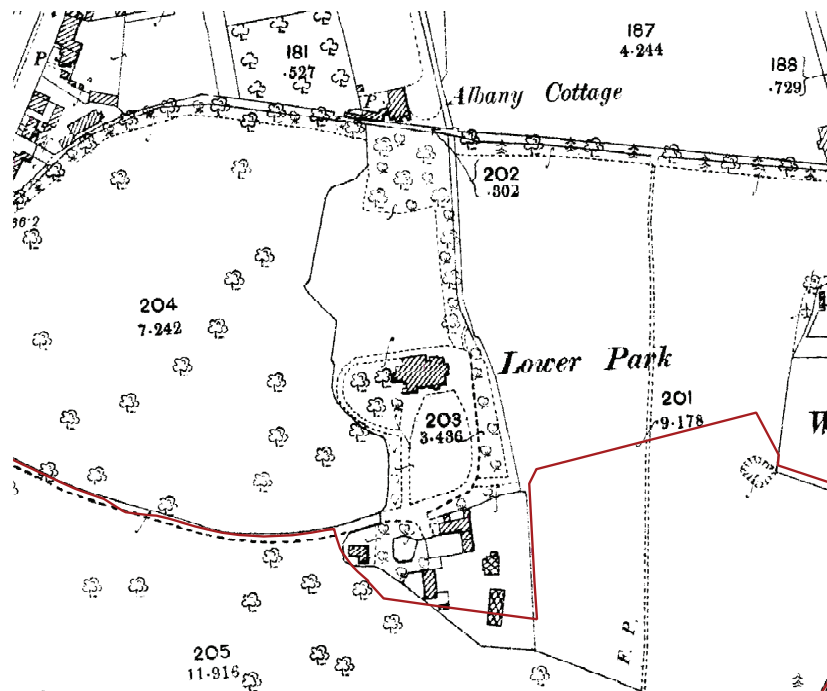
Dedham is a historic market town in the north-east of Essex which at one time was the centre of a prosperous cloth industry. It has a rich heritage of old buildings, sixty-one of which are listed. The town centre is a Conservation Area, and the town lies in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The attractiveness of its location, and good communications, led to a number of substantial gentry houses being built around the periphery of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries. These are typically in the Georgian style and of white or gault brick. Lower Park is one such house.



Map of Dedham showing Lower Park, and the boundary of the Conservation Area and location of listed buildings.

Lower Park

Lower Park is located to the south of the town, and is today accessed from the Colchester Road via a drive which passes through parkland. To the south of the drive are former outbuildings, now in separate ownership, Park Cottage and Park House, the former coach house. The latter, and a garden wall, are like the main house grade II listed. The list descriptions are reproduced in the appendix. Lower Park seems to have been built originally as a dower house to Upper Park. It stood on land which, prior to enclosure, had formed part of the town fields and which belonged to Southfields, a large clothier's house of c.1500. When Lower Park was sold in 1933, it had 40 acres of land, including Southfields house.



Lower Park and its outbuildings on the 2nd edition OS map of the 1890s.

The house and its grounds

The house is large and of several periods, no longer presenting the appearance of a very coherent design. It is all of white brick, a material more expensive and more highly prized than red, much in vogue from the end of the 18th century. The roofs are of slate, low pitch behind parapets. The oldest brickwork is to be found at the south-west corner, where in the south elevation there is a round-arched door. The east front presents the most formal elevation, of three bays with a central pediment. It seems that the main approach to the house was originally on this side. However, the brickwork here is somewhat later in character than that of the south-west corner. The flat-roofed porch here is also a later addition. The south front was later altered with the construction of two canted bays, signalling that this had become had become the principal elevation, both because of its

aspect and the surrounding landscaping. All this would have been complete by about the middle of the 19th century. Much of this work may be attributable to the Revd Charles Eyre (1784-1864) of Upper Park, a writer with an interest in electoral reform.



Lower Park, the south front.

The house was further altered after 1896. The fine interiors, with an Arts and Crafts flavour, probably date from this time. There is a particularly handsome entrance hall with a parquet floor and a stair with twisted balusters and mahogany hand rail below a glazed cupola



Lower Park, the north elevation

In 1964-65, the north wall was largely taken down and built to a reduced footprint under the supervision of Raymond Erith, the well known Dedham architect. This elevation is very plain and functional in appearance.

Map evidence of the 19th century shows the house with gardens to the north and south of it within a wider parkland setting. The garden to the north can be seen to have been subject to several changes of layout, including to the alignment of its western boundary. Today the land to the north is largely greensward, whilst to the south of the house there are better preserved remains of what were once formal gardens. The old redwood which stands on the lawn is a conspicuous reminder of a programme of tree planting, whilst a pond has a rock garden at one end of it.

Significance of the heritage asset

Lower Park is a fine example of a 19th-century gentry house, which shows evidence of an interesting historical development, preserves some good interiors, and stands in a largely parkland setting.

Assessment of the impact of the development proposals

The proposed stables, paddock and swimming pool would be situated in the land to the north of the house. This is essentially informal in character, having the appearance of a field. As has been seen, this side of the house is very plain, lacking the visual quality of the south and east elevations.

The proposed development would be consistent with the present appearance of this land to the north of the house and of its north elevation. The building would be clearly ancillary to the house, and indeed historically it had stables, though they were located elsewhere. The buildings would be of traditional materials, weatherboard and gault brick, and traditional in style. A small amount of land would be lost to the park, effectively eliminating a salient and making the boundary more regular. The revised layout would help define this boundary by placing the stable on it, and would screen the stable yard in views across the parkland. They will any way be partially obscured by trees. Inappropriate tree planting, in the form of silver birches and *Ilex*, would be removed, as would a derelict concrete building.

The reshaping of this piece of land should have a positive effect on its appearance, and thus leave unharmed the setting of the listed building and the parkland unharmed. However it should be borne in mind that further incremental development in this area could have the potential to compromise the setting of this side of the house.

APPENDIX. List descriptions

LOWER PARK

DEDHAM COLCHESTER ROAD 1. 5214 Lower Park TM 0531 27/9 II GV 2. Early C19 house of complex plan, built in grey gault brick laid in English-bond. Walls parapetted and roof slate. Of 2 storeys with attics and round-headed dormers, one in south hip of east range and 4 along each pitch. Windows small-paned hornless sashes. Ground-storey windows beneath straight gauged arches, 3 part sashes with mullions on south of semi-hexagonal south end of north-south range. Eaves - level string course dentilled in brick. East face of north/south range has a pediment, centrally, stone urns at returns of parapets, numerous gault chimney stacks. Southern elevations much altered.
Listing NGR: TM0565632835

COACH HOUSE TO THE SOUTH OF LOWER PARK (Park House)

DEDHAM COLCHESTER ROAD 1. 5214 Coachhouse to south of Lower Park TM 0531 27/8 II GV 2. Early C19 former coachhouse of gault brick in Flemish bond, roof hipped, slate-clad and with leaded bonnets. Of 2 storeys either side of a blocked full height round headed archway, and with 2 windows left and right on first-storey. Ground elevation has a door and one window on left of arch, a modern addition obscures right of arch.

Listing NGR: TM0566732766

GARDEN WALL

Details

DEDHAM COLCHESTER ROAD 1. 5214 Garden wall, south of coachhouse at south of Lower Park TM 0531 27/10 II GV 2. Early C19 garden wall extending south from former coachhouse and returning to west on an L-plan. Red brick in Flemish-bond on a chamfered plinth, with rounder brick coping.

Listing NGR: TM0570432765

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29/11/11