place services

# TENDRING DISTRCIT PROTECTED LANES ASSESSMENTS

## December 2015

place services

Essex County Council

# 1 Introduction

Essex County Council's Place Services Team were commissioned by Essex Highways to undertake an assessment of the Counties existing Protected Lanes using the new Protected Lanes criteria developed by the County Council (ECC 2009) for Chelmsford Borough Council.

The work was undertaken in two stages, comprising an initial stage of desk-based assessment followed by field survey. The field survey stage was undertaken in August 2015. Following the assessment, the scores for each Protected Lane were checked against the threshold for determining Protected Lane status. This report summarises the methodology and results of the project.

# 2 Background

## *2.1 Historic Lanes in Essex*

The greater part of the road network in the Essex countryside derives from at least as far back as the medieval period. Much of it undoubtedly existed in Saxon times and it is likely that many roads and lanes were formed long before that. These lanes are part of what was once an immense mileage of minor roads and track-ways connecting villages, hamlets and scattered farms and cottages. Many were used for agricultural purposes, linking settlements to arable fields, grazing on pasture, heaths and greens; and other resources such as woodland and coastal marsh. Generally these roads were not deliberately designed and constructed; written records of the establishment of roads during the medieval period are rare (Rackham, 1986, 264). Instead they would have started life as track-ways without a bearing surface, although often with defined boundaries including hedgerows, ditches and banks.

The width of ancient roads depended then, as now, on the traffic using them but historic lanes tend to be very variable in width, often within a short distance. Before metalling the roads became rutted in wet weather and the traffic would move over less rutted areas to the sides. Principal roads between towns tended to be wide for this reason. Wide verges and linear roadside greens were also grazed by cattle, sheep and geese being driven through the countryside to market. Roadsides often had ponds associated with them for watering livestock, although it is clear from The Court Rolls that these frequently began life as extraction pits for clay and gravel

(Emmison, 1991, 287). Many lanes had ditches along one or both sides of the lane to demarcate the highway and to assist drainage. These boundaries are frequently even more sinuous than the road itself. On the clay lands, the roads inevitably became water courses during heavy rain; the water would pour off the fields and wash away the muddy surface. They were also eroded through continuous use; over the centuries lanes on hillsides tended to become sunken. Lanes with marked differences in the level between two sides of a lane are also apparent on sloping ground, caused by lynchet formation – the gradual shift of soil down-slope caused by ploughing over hundreds of years. When roads became properly metalled in the 19th century and 20th centuries they became in a sense fossilized; the carriageways were fixed as metalled strips and the verges were formed from the marginal land between the carriageway and the highway boundary (Hunter, 1999).

Today, historic lanes are an important feature in our landscape: they continue to have an articulating role, providing insights into past communities and their activities through direct experience of a lanes historic fabric; contain the archaeological potential to yield evidence about these past human activities and to provide insights into the development of a landscape and the relationship of features within it over time; have considerable ecological value as habitats for plants and animals, serving as corridors for movement and dispersal for some species and acting as vital connections between other habitats; and allow people to enrich their daily lives by accessing cherished historic landmarks and landscapes, encouraging recreation within the countryside, thereby promoting well-being.

## *2.2 Protected Lanes Policy in Essex*

The policy to preserve Essex historic lanes has been in operation for over a quarter of a century and is summarized in a document prepared by Essex County Council (ECC, 1998). However when Local Authorities decided to re-assess their existing Protected Lanes as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Frameworks, precise information on the criteria used to assess historic lanes for Protected Lane status and the original survey guidelines for making this assessment were found to be no longer available. Essex County Council's Historic Environment Specialists were commissioned by Chelmsford Borough Council to develop robust and defensible criteria for its Local Development Framework, Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (Policy DC 15) on Protected Lanes (CBC, 2008, 75) and then to apply these criteria to Protected Lanes in the Borough (ECC, 2009). The criteria used for Chelmsford was found to work well and therefore has been used to

assess those lanes in Uttlesford and Braintree. The Historic Environment Consultants have now been commissioned to extend this to the remainder of the Protected Lanes across the County.

### *2.3 Protected Lanes Policy in Tendring District Council*

Tendring District Council in defining their Core Strategy and Development Control Policies wanted to retain their Protected Historic Lane Policy from their present Local Plan (Core Policy 10 and Development Policy 5) which identified a total of 16 lanes, however, there was a lack of supporting information for this policy and the Lanes had not been re-assessed for a period of at least 25 years.

# 3 Reason for the project

Development Policies can have significant effects and so it is important that the criteria for decision making and the evidence base on which decisions are made is comprehensive, robust and defensible. Consistency and transparency of judgment is crucial to public acceptability and fairness of the process. Detailed criteria for Protected Lane status and a methodical articulation of how a lane does or does not meet such criteria, which clearly illustrates the rationale behind a lanes selection, will make a major contribution to achieving that acceptability.

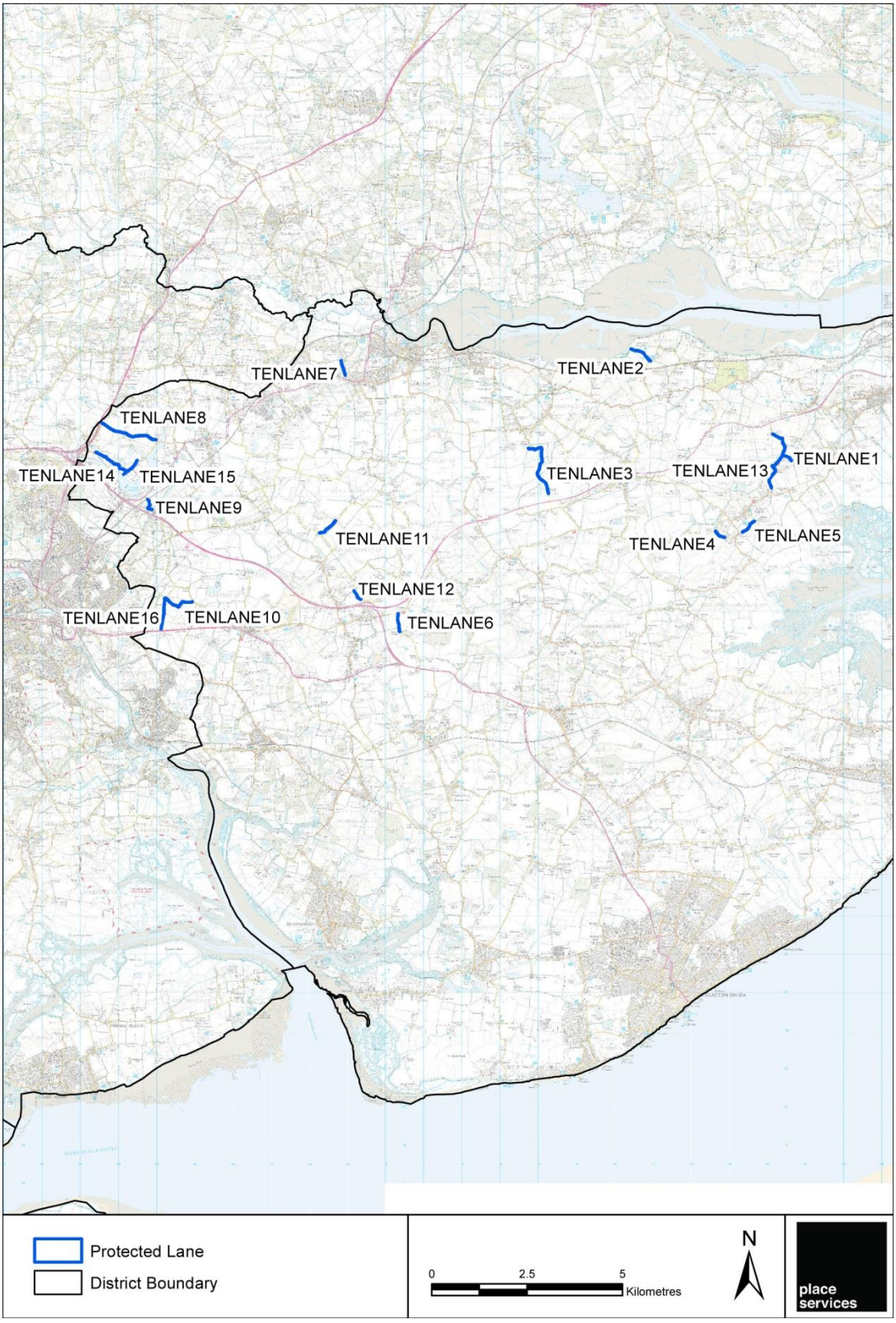


*Figure 1 - Location of the protected lanes at the start of the survey*

# 4 Protected Lanes Assessment Procedure Criteria and Scoring System

The following section describes the processes undertaken in the assessment of each of the protected lane within the Borough. This comprised both office based and on site assessment with all of the lanes visited. Figure 1 shows the location of all of the protected lanes.

## *4.1 Units of Assessment*

Each Protected Lane was originally identified by Parish name. As part of the project each lane was assigned a unique number (using TENLane 1 etc). A desk based assessment using Google Earth and Google Earth Streetview, Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), and GIS data relevant to the criteria was undertaken. Examples of the GIS data used includes ancient Woodland, Special Verges, County Wildlife Sites, heritage assets including designated sites, and SSSI's. The use of Google Earth Streetview allowed a detailed assessment to be made along the length of the lane as part of the desk based assessment.

As part of this initial assessment the lane names were identified by the National Street Gazetteer. Where more than one lane of the original protected lanes was identified with the same National Street Gazetteer name these were merged to form a single unit unless the separate lengths were of significant difference. In some cases the lane had two street names but was a single lane, in which case both names were added to the recording sheet.

For the purposes of the field assessment, further details were added to the sheets undertaken for the desk based phase of assessment. These forms were completed in digital format being based on individual **units of assessment**. For a lane which was largely intact along the whole of its historic length (as identified on the first edition OS map), a single **unit of assessment** was identified and only one form completed. However, there were cases where extensive alterations had occurred along a historic lane, or where a lane had been broken by a new road which meant that these lengths of lane automatically fell out of the criteria and as such either the lane was broken into separate units or were reduced in length. So for each named lane, one or more assessment forms had to be completed.

From the original 16 lanes protected by the present Local Plan the above work reduced this number to 9; these are listed in Table 1.

## *4.2 Field Assessment*

Each historic lane was assessed in good weather conditions by a team of two historic environment specialists. Digital assessment sheets were updated as each lane was inspected.

### 4.2.1 Photographic Record

Most units of assessment had a colour digital image taken of it and the photo stored on the unit assessment folder within the computer project. Photographs were taken which illustrated the range of forms that a lane took and its historic features e.g. banks, ditches, veteran pollards, hedges etc. Also specific photos were taken of areas of damage or significant alterations to the lanes.

### 4.2.2 Data Fields:

For each unit of assessment, the following data fields were completed:

- *Name* – name of historic lane
- *Unit* – the number of the unit of assessment
- *Highway / Byway Classification* – Class III, Unclassified or Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT)
- *NGRs* **–** X and Y numbers for each end of the units of assessment. These were generated from the GIS after completion of the assessment. To allow this, the assessment maps (one for each historic lane) were marked at the beginning and end points of each unit of assessment during the field visit and the map annotated with the number of the unit.

### 4.2.3 Diversity

***Description of form and features –*** this was a description of the historic lane for the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on the following where possible:

- Form(s) that the lane took e.g. sunken, flat, raised, or lynchet (positive lynchet on uphill side and/or negative lynchet on down hill side).

*Figure 2 - Change in form of lane moving uphill, with lynchet on left (TENLane 13)*

- Carriageway surface(s) e.g. tarmac, stone, dirt, road planings etc.
- Verges – width, flat, sloping etc.

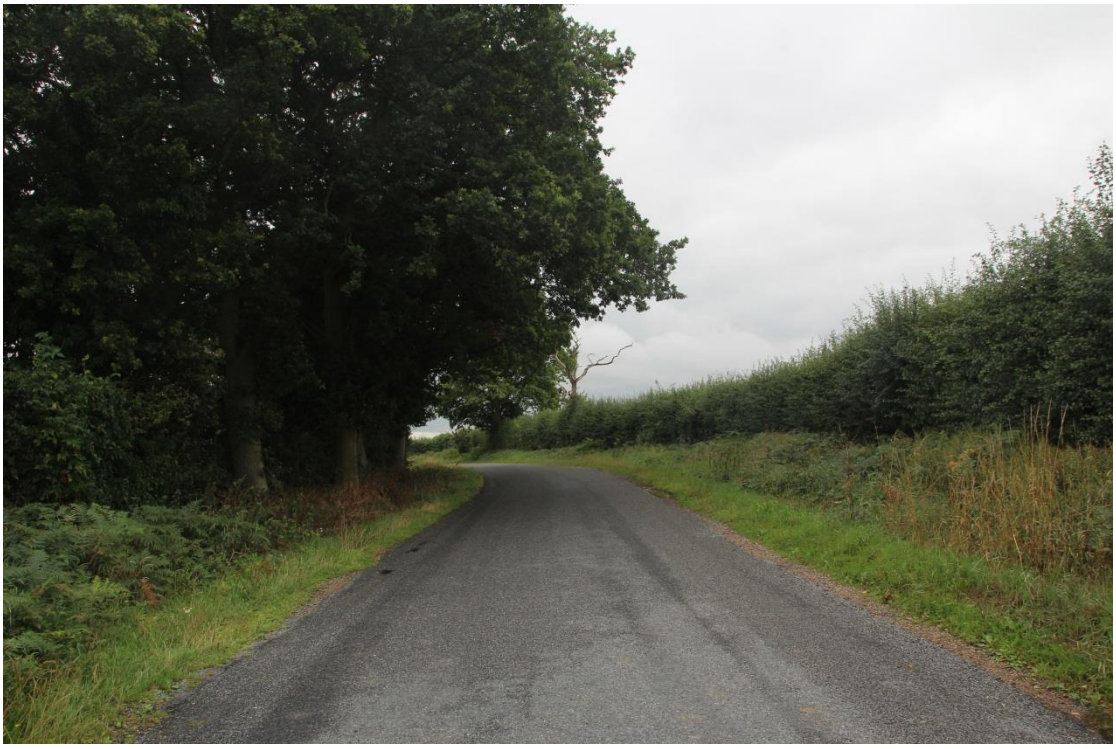

*Figure 3 – Verges, ditches and banks  on lane at Ravens Green Lane (TENLane11)*

- Banks and ditches including approximate dimensions and profiles
- If sunken – depth of sunken lane and amount of variation etc

*Figure 4 - Sunken lane at Wall Lane (TENLane 2)*

- Associated vegetation e.g. hedgerows (with an indication of species mix i.e. largely single species, large variety of woody species etc, veteran trees (including pollards, coppice stools), mature trees, grass / flowering plants on verges and banks.

*Figure 5 – Changing vegetation along the length of the lane, with coppiced stool on right side (TENLane 10)*

### 4.2.4 Historic Integrity

***Description of erosion damage –*** this was a description of erosion damage to the structure of the lane from vehicular traffic along the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on damage to banks, verges and surfaces.

*Figure 6 - Shows area of damage from traffic to the road surface and up to the edge of the lane (TENLane 8)*

***Description of improvements*** – this was a description of any significant improvements that had been made to a lane along the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on the type and extent of traffic calming measures and other 'improvements' such as widening, kerbing etc.

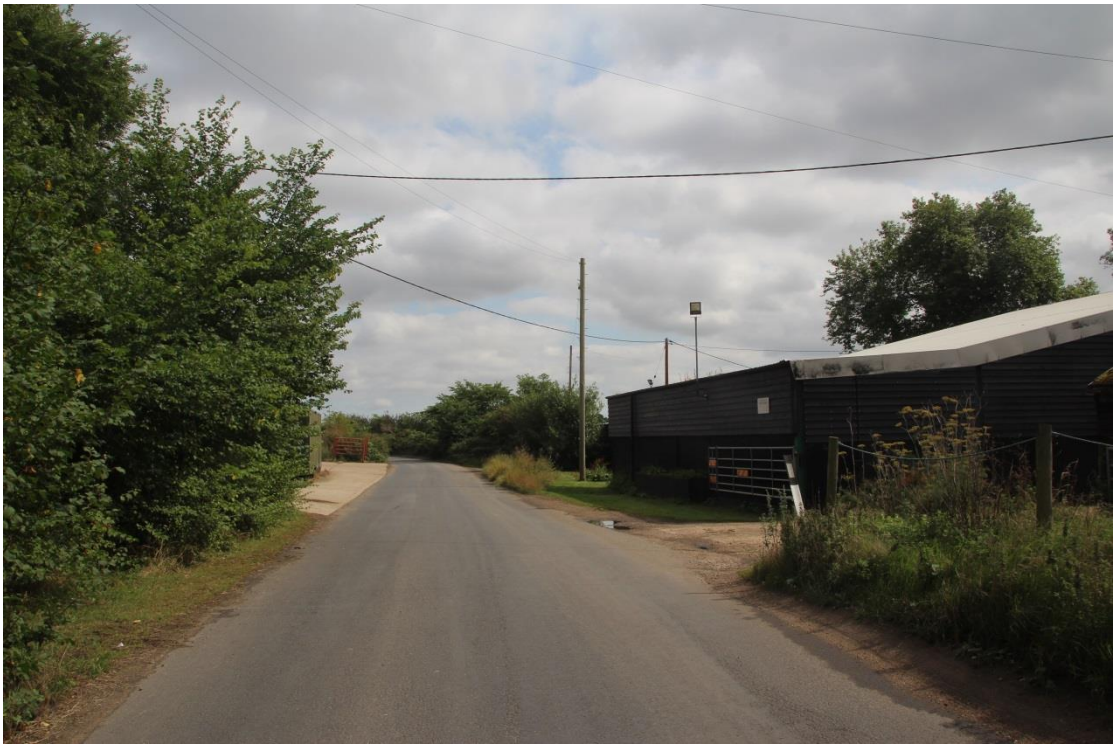

*Figure 7 – Wick lane showing concrete aprons and access to farm buildings (TENLane 8)*

### 4.2.5 Archaeological Potential

Archaeological potential of the lane and its associated features such as the ditches, banks and greens etc. These features can all contain important archaeological remains that relate to the development and human interaction with the landscape.

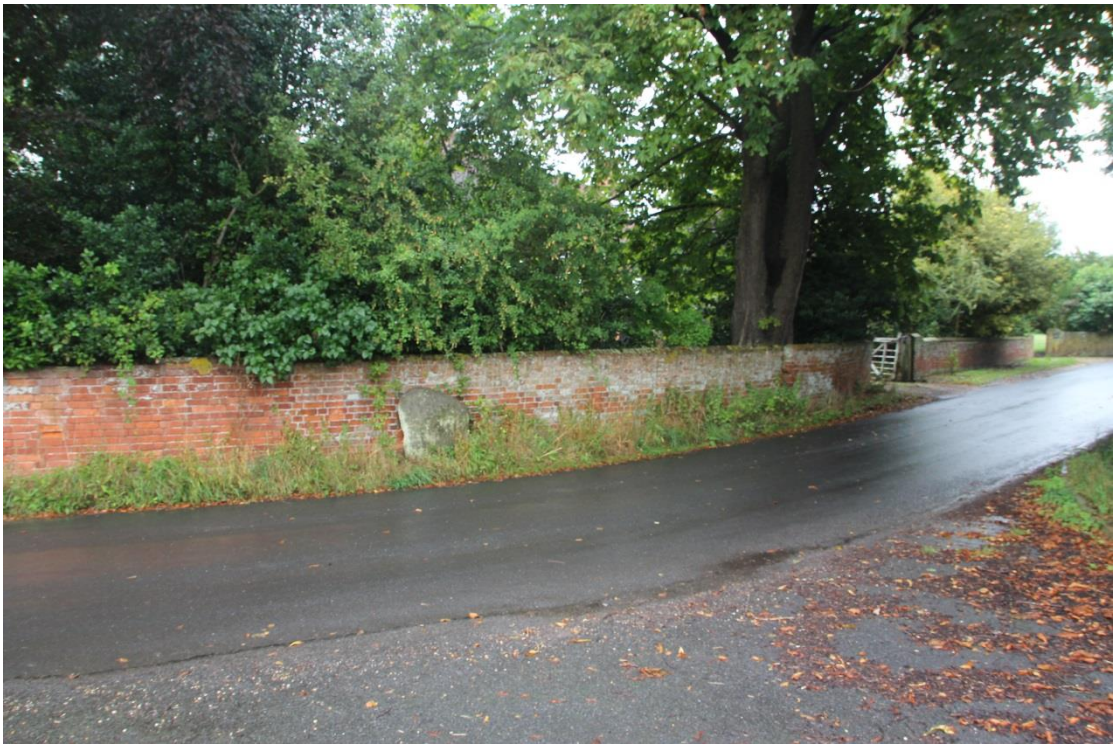

*Figure 8 –Hill Road showing wall to Hill House with probable glacial erratic leaning against the wall (TENLane 13)*

### 4.2.6 Aesthetic Value

***Views* –** notable views, which are particularly scenic, unusual or which include contemporary historic features of note e.g. a parish church, listed building, farm complex or landscape that are framed by the lane and/or its associated vegetation were identified.

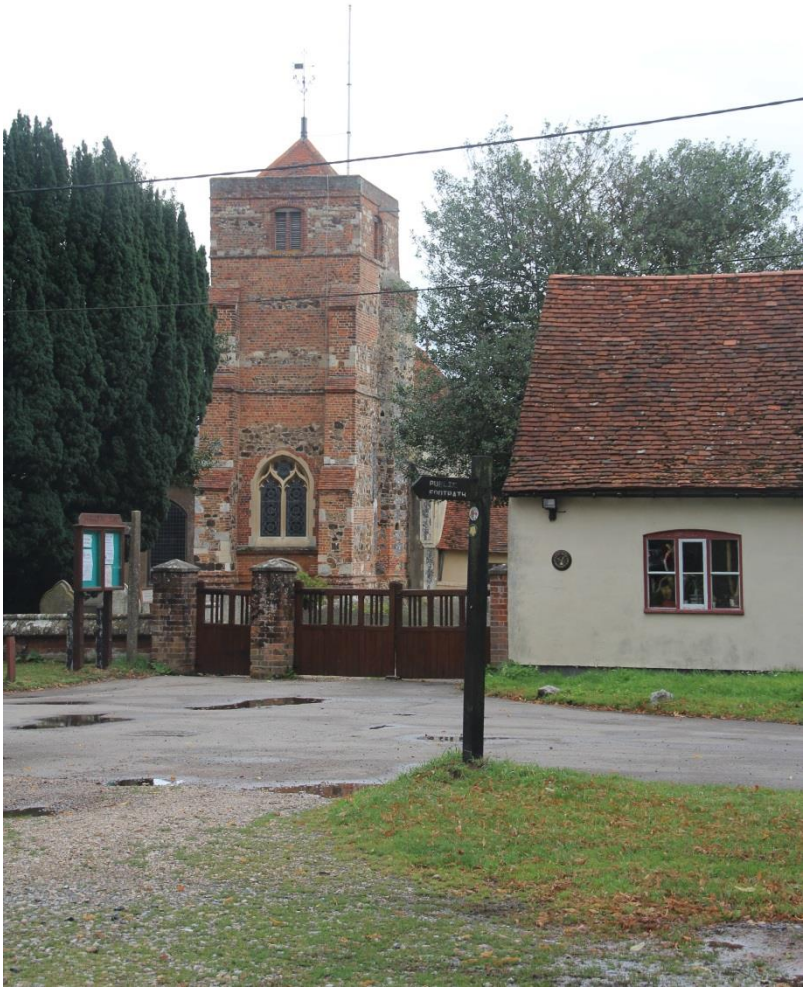

*Figure 9 – Church Hill showing the church/hall complex adjacent to the Lane (TENLane 7)*