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# HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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## BASILDON TOWN CENTRE

**Barratt Eastern Counties**

**February 2012**

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**Report Status:**  
**FINAL**

**Issue Date:**  
**February 2012**

**CgMs Ref:**  
**JH/12998**

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# 1.0 BASILDON TOWN CENTRE

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by CgMs on behalf of Barratt Eastern Counties to provide advice on the heritage assets within Basildon town centre and to inform the regeneration proposals for the Town Centre.

The regeneration of Basildon Town Centre represents one of the largest regeneration projects in both the Thames Gateway and the UK. The area provides the potential for development of over £1 billion worth of regeneration, with the construction of around 3,650 homes, 49,000 sqm of retail and leisure space, 53,000 sqm of commercial and 4,000 sqm of community use. The development framework identifies five key regeneration areas centred around the Town Square in the heart of Basildon.

This report will identify and assess the heritage assets within the regeneration areas largely centred around Brooke House, a Grade II listed, 1960s residential mid-rise tower block within the eastern part of the town centre.

In addition to Brooke House, there are a number of surrounding townscape features including the ramps, steps and retaining walls of East Square and a raised pool and 'Mother and Child' sculpture within Town Square that are also Grade II listed, meaning special regard should be given to their architectural and aesthetic interest. These heritage assets also form an integral part of the original planned town centre and the setting of Brooke House.

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, 2010 (referred to as PPS5), this report includes an assessment of the significance of these designated heritage assets in order to highlight the anticipated regeneration opportunities.



*"Basildon will become a City which people from all over the world will want to visit. It will be placed where all classes of community can meet freely together on equal terms and enjoy common cultural recreational facilities."*

Rt. Hon. Lewis Silkin, 1948

## 2.0 HISTORIC APPRAISAL

### 2.1 BASILDON NEW TOWN

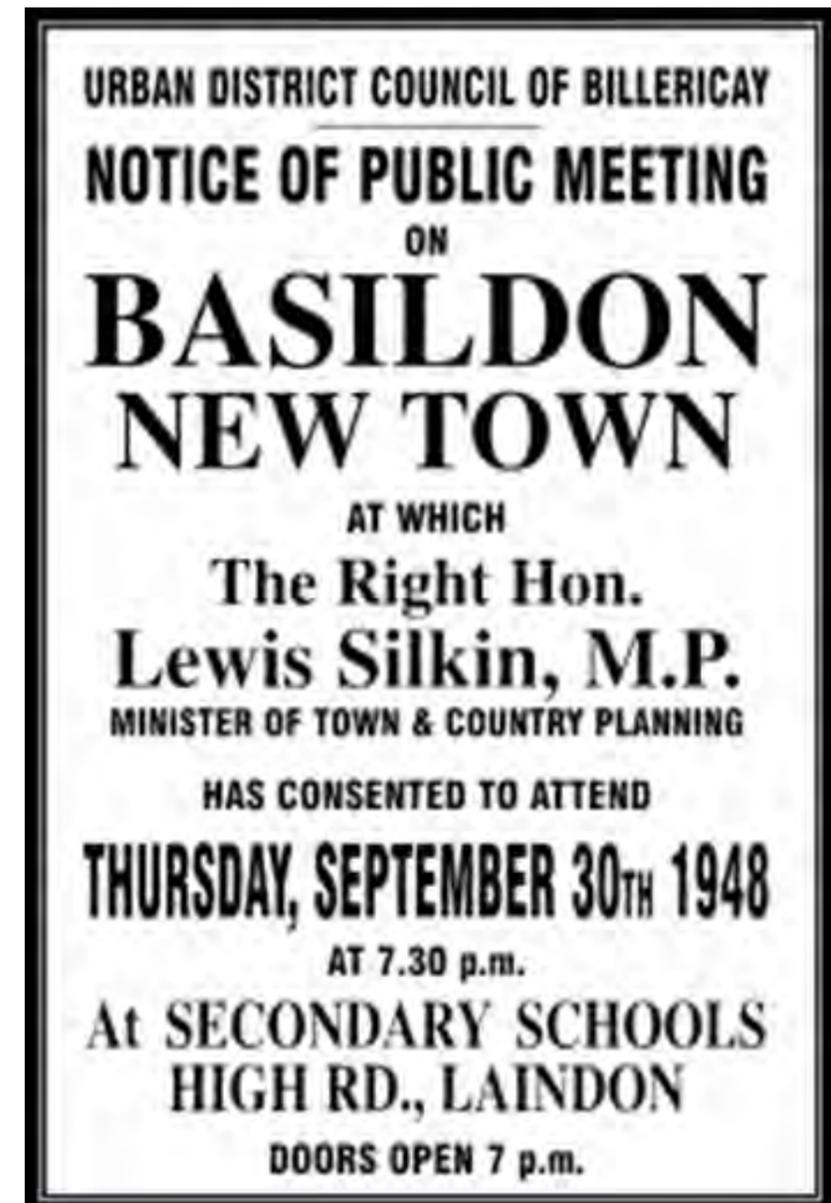
Basildon originates from the Saxon period, and is referenced in the Domesday Book (1086), as Belesduna. The name has subsequently evolved over the centuries, with variations include Berdlesdon, Batledon and Behoter. Basildon developed from a modest hamlet to the East of Lee Chapel, later combining with the larger settlements of Laindon, Vange and Pitsea to the north-west, south and south-east respectively.

After the Second World War, the Labour Government under the leadership of Clement Atlee, created the New Towns Act 1946, aimed at providing much needed housing to take the strain off London, which was suffering from overcrowding and a shortage of housing due to war damage. In the same year the, Stevenage in Hertfordshire became the first of 11 New Towns to be designated between 1946-51.

The Act was intended to provide more efficient and centrally controlled planning for these new settlements by the appointment of Development Corporations, which took over the local governance of these areas from existing county and borough councils.

Thus Billericay Urban District Council and Essex County Council petitioned for the creation of a new settlement, focused around the existing village of Basildon, and the nearby towns of Pitsea and Laindon, sitting in a shallow bowl in the flat landscape of the Thames Estuary. This landscape was influential in the eventual design of Brooke House. This was a dramatic project, a proposal, originally, for a city of over 80,000 people, and a site was thus provided of 7,818 acres, in an area six miles long and three miles wide.

The population of the Basildon district, including Pitsea and Laindon, had been growing before foundation of the New Town, and rose from 4,449 in 1921 to 34,000 in 1951. Now, however, the population of Basildon is in excess of 120,000. The formation of Basildon New Town was seen to provide an opportunity for growth, and to focus it into a single, organised settlement. Records also reveal that at the time of its designation as a New Town, the Basildon district had 78 miles of unmade roads, and that two thirds of its 8,500 properties were below the standard expected by the government through the Housing Act. These factors instrumental in the design concept and construction of Brooke House, incontrovertibly an urban piece of architecture, designed as a grand civic gesture for a growing settlement.



**Fig 1** (above left): The poster used to promote the New Town concept in Basildon.

**Fig 2** (above right): An historic photo showing protest against the redevelopment of Basildon.

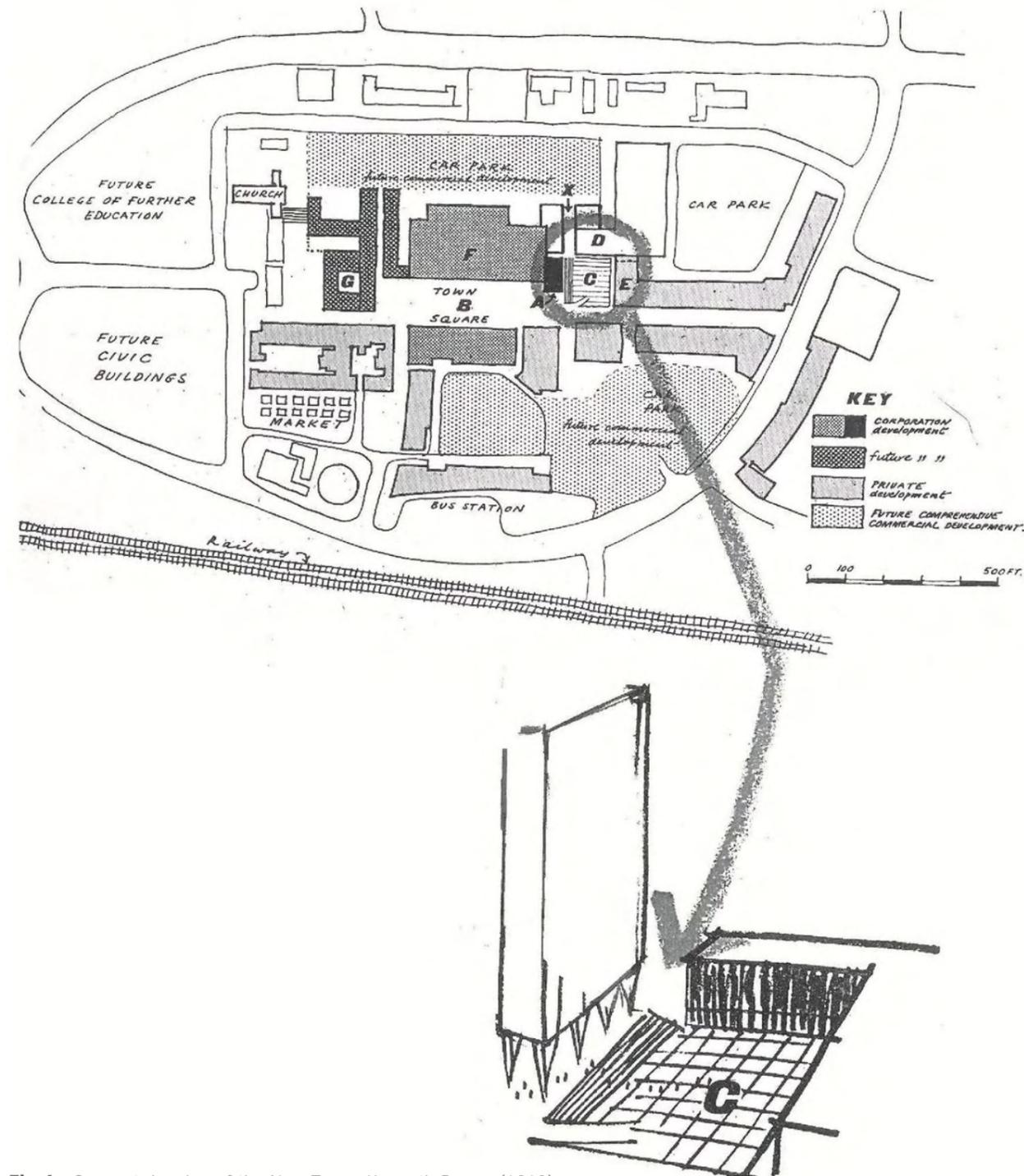
**Fig 3** (bottom): An early image of the recently completed New Town centre of Basildon.

## 2.0 HISTORIC APPRAISAL

### 2.2 BASILDON NEW TOWN

A Masterplan was thus initially drawn up for a town of 80,000 people, and within two years of designation, 1,000 new houses had been constructed. New industries, and companies like Ford, moved in, while a new Masterplan was produced in 1956; by this point, the projected population had risen to 106,000. Despite this appearance of centralised organisation, there is a noticeable sense of disquiet in the architectural press of the time. The critic Kenneth Browne, writing in the *Architectural Review*, noted that, far from the central Development Corporation having a firm handle on the area's planning and final appearance, 'negotiations for site development were carried out with private developers and each, naturally, picked out the site he thought most favourable financially.'

This led inevitably to piecemeal development...and the task of relating one building to another became virtually impossible.' he also noted that the planning itself was poor, 'such a site called for imaginative planning of a high order but this it unfortunately did not get.'



**Fig 4** : Concept drawing of the New Town. Kenneth Brown (1962).

B) Town Square C) East Square D) Post Office Building E) Freedom House F) Parade of Shops G) later proposed office block.

## 2.0 HISTORIC APPRAISAL

### 2.3 BROOKE HOUSE

Brooke House is a point-block, a high rise apartment-building with the circulation and services in the central core and the residential accommodation grouped around it on several floors. The building is based on a rectangular plan, with two long sides, punctuated by densely packed, triangular bay windows, and two plain, short sides. The building consists of 14 storeys of residential accommodation, with six flats to each floor, raised on a set of piloti, 27 feet in height, and providing space for commercial accommodation.

Brooke House was, at the point of its construction in 1962, imposed onto an urban landscape whose planning had been somewhat limited, uncontrolled. Driven by the desires of individual developers, and lacking a firm hand, Basildon lacked a visual and practical centre.

Brooke House, one of the first building projects in the town to be entirely driven by the Development Corporation itself, was to be the visual node that the town needed. It was designed by the Corporation's architect, Anthony B. Davies, with advice from Basil Spence, the architect of Coventry Cathedral, the Hyde Park Barracks tower and the New Zealand Parliament's 'Beehive' Building, in Wellington.

In terms of its architecture and planning, Brooke House was conceived, therefore, to be a work of high status within the town, an attempt to rebalance many of the issues that had arisen during the town's early years. Architecturally, it was intended to be a new physical landmark. At 160 feet, it was intentionally taller than the Vange Ridge, which separates Basildon from the River Thames, and in a largely low-rise settlement, in an almost entirely flat landscape, it provided a much needed visual focus. Brooke House was built to be commensurate with a town of 100,000 people; it is dramatically, perceptibly urban. Overall, therefore, Brooke House was, in its conception, a piece of architecture to define Basildon, an expression of its scale and importance, and a waymarker, identifying the town centre's location from miles around.

Its height was combined with an architectural approach which sought to impress at street level. Standing on 27 foot tall, Corbusian piloti, the building rises dramatically above a broad set of stairs, down to a sunken square. Kenneth Browne compared the effect to that of Ancient Greek and Roman temples, and described it as architecture of a 'civic scale'. Once more there is a sense here to which the building is seen as reflective of a major town of 100,000 people.

This major 'civic scale', however, is broken down by detailing which seeks to make the building more accessible, more human thus, the fenestration pattern, of densely placed, triangular bay windows, breaks down the otherwise monumental scale of the building's two main facades. It was meanwhile noted at the time that the dark brown machine brick used for much of the building's exterior was designed to contrast with the frequently grey and overcast skies typical of the Thames Estuary.

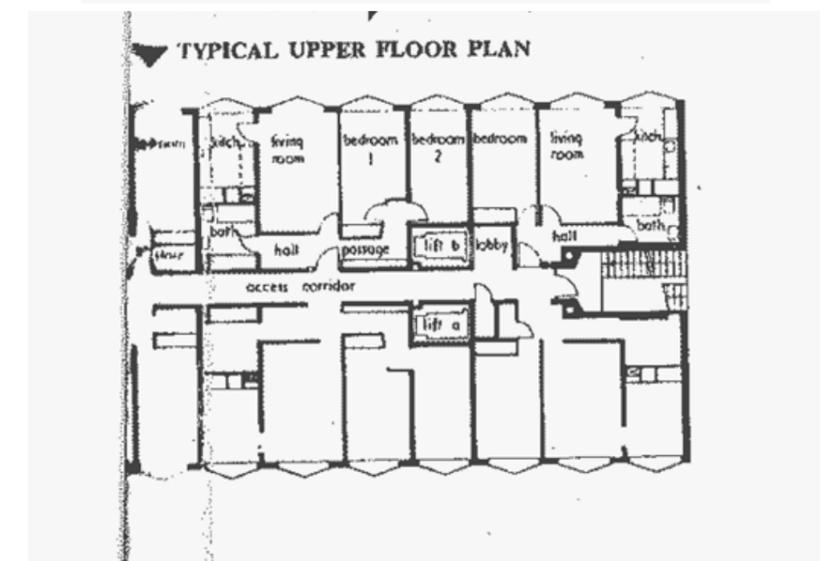
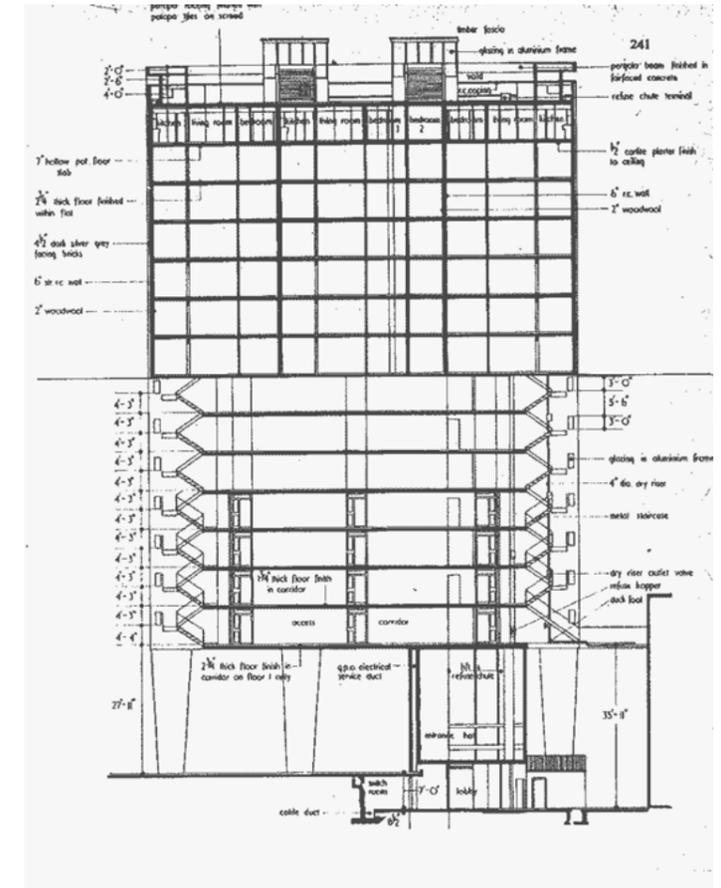


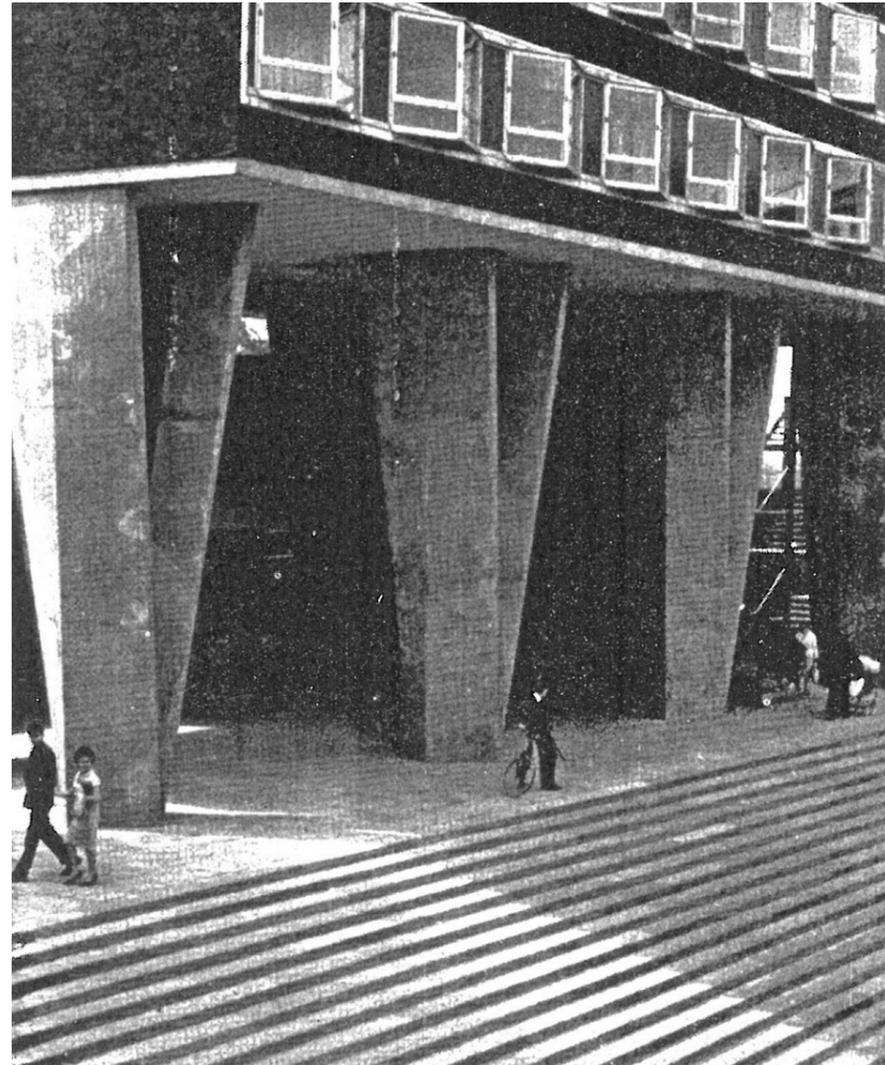
Fig 5 (left) : Photo of Brooke House 2011

Fig 6 (above) : Original architectural Plans for Brook House

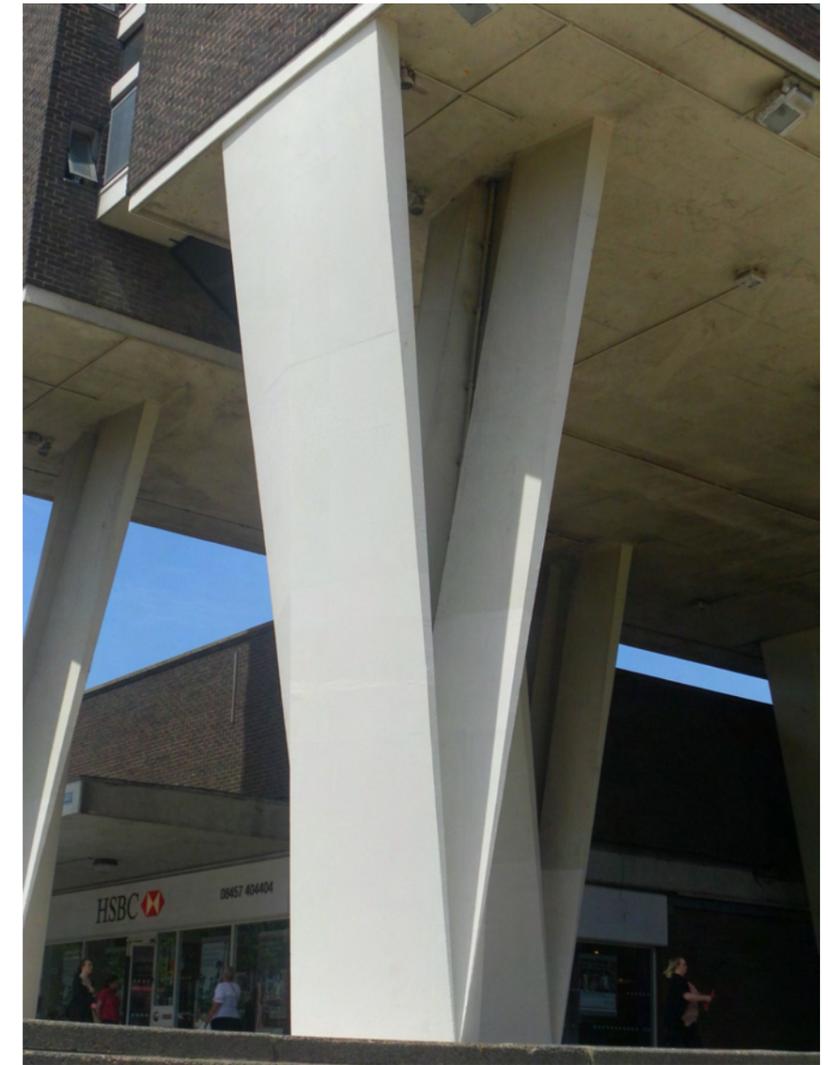
## 2.0 HISTORIC APPRAISAL

### 2.4 BROOKE HOUSE

Brooke House, as a tall building in the main commercial district of a town, might be expected to provide office accommodation, but it is residential. Again, this is an expression of urban planning ideals, as the Development Corporation sought to provide life to an area that, after the shops closed, might be expected to become desolate. Although Oscar Newman's seminal *Defensible Space* was a decade away from publication, it is clear that Brooke House provided a sense of communal surveillance to a city centre otherwise devoid of population after closing time, allowing Basildon to avoid a situation where its centre could become a 'no-go area'. The building's design is partly driven by a desire to provide successful residential accommodation, and the raised nature of the residential areas, lifted above the centre on the pilotis, ensure that the lowest residential floors are raised above street level, reducing noise levels. This raised effect also allows for the ground level to be used for commercial purposes: shops are positioned to the rear of the building, with Brooke House itself providing a covered forecourt.



**Fig 7:** Close-up view of a pilotis, 2011



**Fig 8 :** Close-up view of the base of Brooke House. Kenneth Browne's assertion that it borrows from the Classical precedent of Greek and Roman temples is more fully illustrated here: the pilotis appear as columns in a large portico, atop a flight of steps reflecting the crepidoma found on such temples.

## 3.0 HERITAGE ASSETS

### 3.1 DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

There are a number of designated heritage assets within Basildon town centre concentrated around Brooke House. The special interest of the asset will be discussed and their significance explained.

#### Brooke House

Brooke House is a Grade II listed building, designated on the 22 December 1998 for its architectural and historic interest.

The fourteen storey, residential tower has a striking architectural appearance, notably the eight 'V' shaped concrete pilotis. Which elevate the upper floors. The building's central light weight aluminium framed glass entrance lobby which sits amongst the pilotis, has an altogether light weight appearance and is commercial rather than residential in scale. The building's distinctive external appearance is formed of rows of faceted bay windows along its east and west elevations, set within dark brown brick cladding.

Whilst the interior has not been viewed, it is believed that some flats retain original timber panelling.

The building makes an important contribution to the original arrangement of the New Town. As a landmark piece of architecture, its scale and visibility define the town centre.

The buildings significance clearly derives from its distinctive architectural form, brutalist design and its innovative concept as one of the first New Town schemes driven entirely by the Development Co-operation providing residential accommodation on a civic scale.

In addition to Brooke House there are numerous external townscape features which contribute to its immediate setting and intrinsic to the New Town.

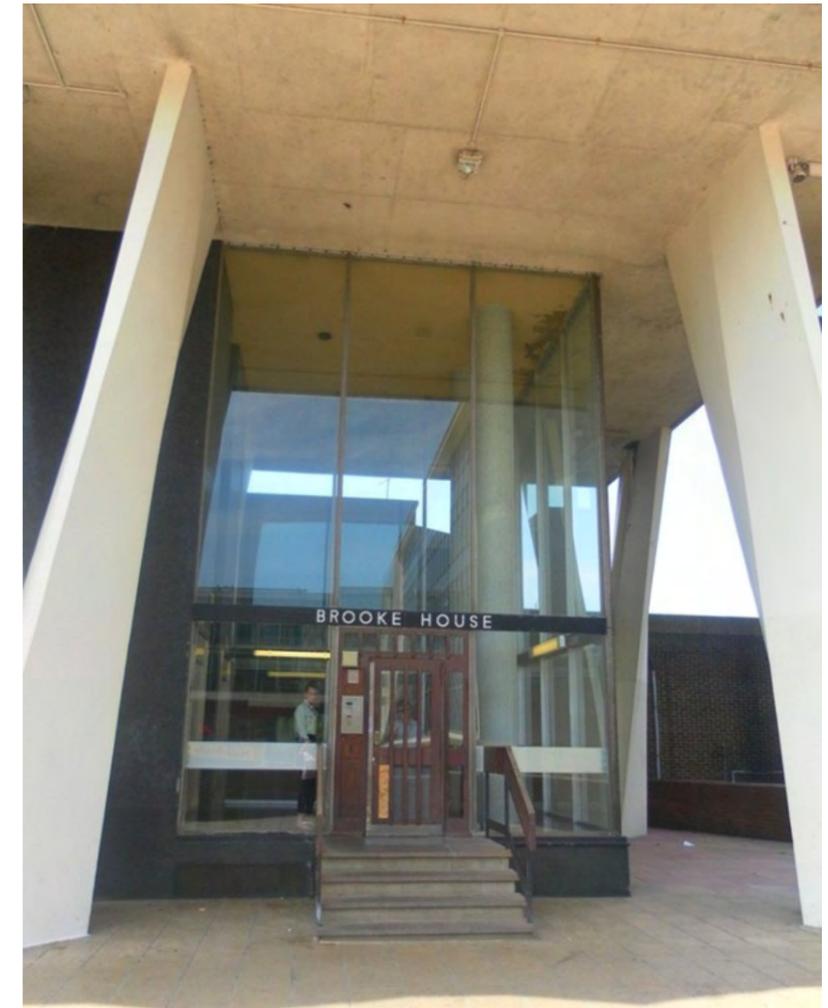


Fig 9-12 : Various photos of Brooke House, 2011

## 3.0 HERITAGE ASSETS

### 3.2 DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

The following elements are also Grade II listed in association with Brooke House.

#### East Square

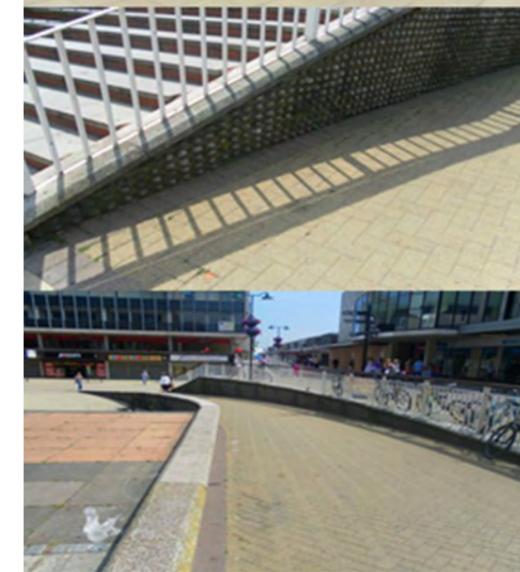
The retaining walls, ramps, steps, staircase, bench and raised paving within the sunken East Square, are all Grade II listed and all form part of the original townscape designed in conjunction with Brooke House in 1962.

A broad staircase leads from the east side of Brooke House into the sunken square, to the south a curved ramp and steps with cobbled retaining walls sweep from the raised pedestrian level of the town square to the sunken square.

The area is defined by tubular steel railings with hard wood handrails. The eastern side of the square is fronted by Freedom House, a four storey building with two tier retail parade, and the Post Office building to the north, neither of which are **independently listed**. The 'L' shaped staircase which links East Square to an upper level of shops is Grade II listed, as is the bespoke designed bench at its foot.

The significance of these townscape features derives from their contribution to the planned composition and concept of Basildon Town Centre, as a formal setting for Brooke House.

The construction methods and materials are clearly modern and reflect the brutalist style, however there are elements which display more detail such as the pebbles in-laid within the retaining walls and ramps to East Square and the bespoke timber bench.



**Fig 13** (above left): Photo of East Square shortly after construction.

**Fig 14** (below left) Photo of the bespoke staircase which leads from East Square to the upper level of shops and Freedom House, 2011.

**Fig 15-19** (far right): Various photos of East Square, 2011, showing the distinctive pebble retaining walls of the Square.

## 3.0 HERITAGE ASSETS

### 3.3 DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

#### Raised Pool Sculpture

To the south west of Brooke House, set within Town Square is a rectangular raised pool, sculpture and fountain. Constructed in 1962, it also forms part of the town centre design and is Grade II listed. The raised pool has granite-clad sides and coping, to the east is set a bronze sculpture of 'Mother and Child' and fountain, by Maurice Lambert (1904-64).

Born in Paris, Lambert began his art training through his apprenticeship to the sculptor Francis Derwent Wood RA. From 1919 to 1927 he attended life classes at Chelsea Polytechnic. He was a sculptor in bronze, stone, wood, concrete and glass of figurative and abstract subjects.

Principally the significance of these townscape features is their aesthetic and artistic values and association with Maurice Lambert, a renowned sculptor. Additionally the sculpture and raised pool contribute to the composition and setting of Brooke House and the New Town heritage of Basildon Town Centre.

The designated heritage assets identified above are in a reasonable state of repair and retain their original form and details. Individually the assets exhibit architectural, aesthetic and artistic values, collectively they also form a set piece of townscape.



**Fig 20** (top): Maurice Lambert's Mother and Child sculpture and fountain

**Fig 21 & 22** (bottom): Photos showing the raised pool in the context of Town Square and Brooke House

## 4.0 REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES

### 4.1 BROOKE HOUSE

Brooke House has clear architectural, aesthetic and townscape value. Any alterations which would significantly alter the **building's form or appearance, resulting in significant loss of original fabric, are likely to be considered unacceptable and difficult to justify robustly.** However there may be a case for proposing improvements and enhancements.

To the north the original fire escape staircase supported by a single pilotis has been enclosed by a metal framed glass box, mimicking the design of the original central lobby but with less finesse. This modern addition makes no contribution to the significance of the listed building and obscures the staircase and pilotis it encases. These features are part of the buildings original design and are listed. There is scope to undertake alterations to the form and appearance of the enclosure, whilst a replacement would need to respond positively to the scale, style and materials of Brooke House, a replacement could better reveal the listed staircase. The removal or alterations to the staircase would require listed building consent and justification appropriate to the level of harm proposed.

Whilst currently it is thought that Brooke House will remain unaffected by the regeneration of the surrounding area, its external fabric would benefit from general maintenance and repairs, particularly the windows which are aesthetically losing their original clean lines and appearance.

Hard landscaping is part of the original design concept of the town centre, proposed to create clean lines and avoid clutter. The paving around Brooke House has been removed and replaced in a piecemeal fashion resulting in a patchwork of materials, colours and textures. A possible regeneration opportunity and townscape enhancement would be the renewal and replacement of the paving to create a uniform appearance, in turn improving the **building's setting.**

Directly to the east of Brooke House, at its base, broad steps ascend into East Square. The steps are a principal part of the original setting and presentation of Brooke House, representative of steps leading up to a temple. However the steps have been compromised by the introduction of a red brick wall and ramps, which occupy the area directly to the north of Brooke House.

This has consequently resulted in a section of the steps being lost, altering the original form and unbalancing their composition with Brooke House.

The removal of the red brick wall would facilitate the reinstatement of the steps in some form would be beneficial to the setting of Brooke House. Whilst this would be a considerable improvement, consideration should be given to the fact that the wall incorporates a handrail which influences the general pedestrian flow and aids accessibility. It is recommended that proposals take into consideration accessibility.

#### **Summary of Regeneration Opportunities for Brooke House**

**Improve the fire escape staircase enclosure**

**Removal of the red brick retain walls**

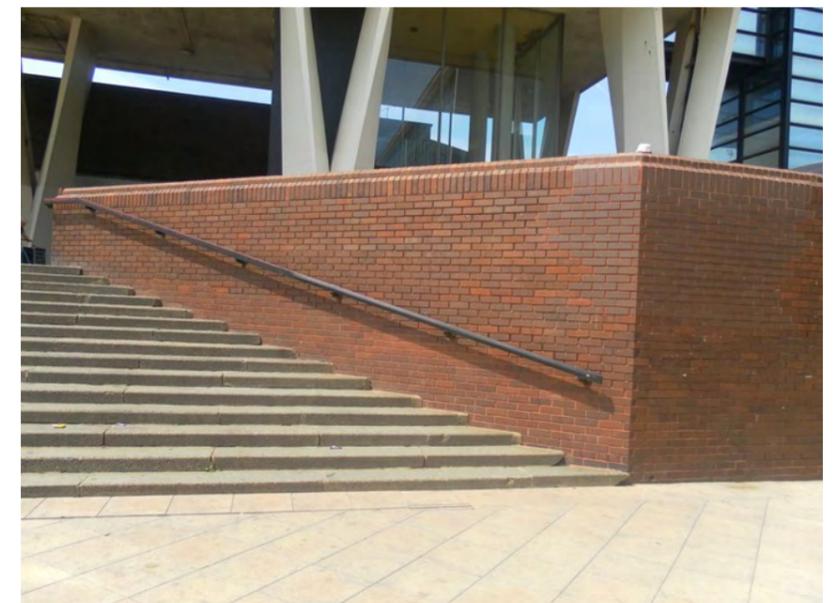
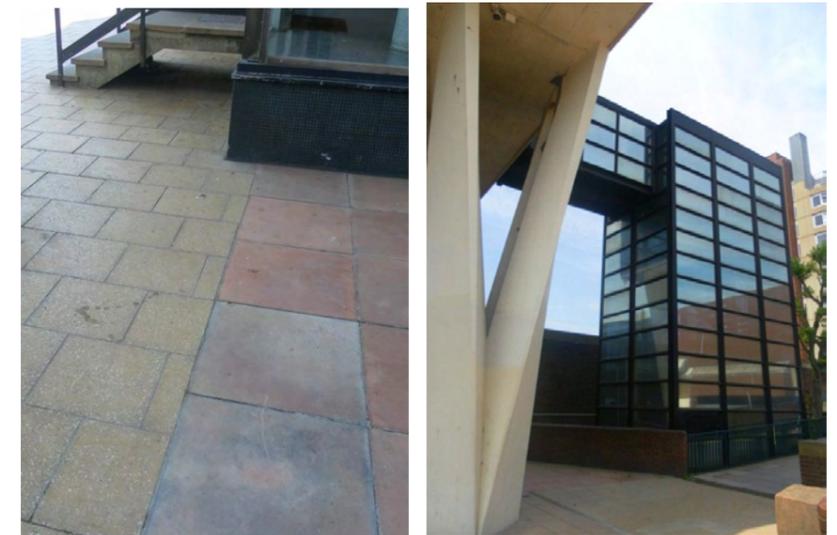
**Improve connectivity and accessibility**

**Reinstate the northern section of the broad stairs leading up to Brooke House**

**Consolidate the ramps and improve access through to North Gunnels, improving access to East Square**

**Improve the paving around the base of Brooke House**

**General external repairs, maintenance or upgrading of windows to Brooke House.**



**Fig 24** (top left): Mismatching hard surface at the base of Brooke House.

**Fig 23** (top right): The non original metal framed glass enclosure which concealed an original fire escape staircase and pilotis.

**Fig 25** (bottom): Red brick retaining wall which cuts across the original steps leading from Brooke House to East Square

## 4.0 REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES

### 4.2 EAST SQUARE

Located directly to the east of Brooke House, East Square is a sunken plaza and defined public space. Statutorily listed elements off the square are those structures which define and provide access, such as ramps, steps and pebbled retaining walls.

The composition of East Square and the listed features are largely intact, but would benefit greatly from general maintenance and redecoration. One notable alteration which has occurred over time is the loss of the original two tone lattice paving, which has been unsympathetically replaced by uniform, putty coloured square pavers. An opportunity for enhancement would be the reinstatement of the original paving design which would enhance the visual aesthetics and quality of the square.

Significant alterations to, or the removal of, the ramps, steps, staircase and bespoke bench should be avoided due to their contribution to the original composition of the square and setting of Brooke House. However, the railings could be decorated and the pebbled retaining walls cleaned and restored. The original concept of the area had limited street trees and modest planters. Therefore soft landscaping should be kept to a minimum to retain the square's character, clean-lines and openness.

A modest but effective enhancement would be the replacement of the simple black benches within the square, their removal and replacement would be a welcome improvement. Replacement furniture could reflect the design and materials of the bespoke bench at the base of the steps to Freedom House, which is visually attractive and in keeping with the New Town era.

Activity within the square is currently lacking and should be encouraged to create a sense of vibrancy. The introduction of a sensitive lighting scheme to illuminate the square would improve its appearance and encourage night time use.

Whilst Brooke House and the other designated heritage assets within Basildon Town centre are the principal focus of this report, the undesignated buildings adjoining Brooke House and surrounding East Square make a notable contribution to the original planned townscape. Basildon Council have commented on the future developments with reference to those properties adjoining Brooke House along the north side of Town Square. Notable features identified include white and black marble facades, glazing and cloister style frontages. Elements which could be reflected in the design details of the development proposals

The redevelopment of Freedom House could reinforce the setting of surrounding designated heritage assets. Providing improved facilities and connectivity. Whilst proposals would need to consider the listed staircase and bespoke bench to the north east of East Square, these elements could be incorporated into proposals.

Additionally it would be beneficial to retain an upper walkway, as a feature of the New Town era and to provide additional active edges around the square. Whilst Freedom House as a building contributes to the planned setting of East Square and Brooke House, the redevelopment of the building could offer significant enhancements and better-quality retail and leisure provision for the town. Consequently facilitating the enhancement and reinstatement of East Square as a vibrant public plaza.

A replacement building would need to consider its setting and surrounding designated heritage assets. Scale, form, design details and materials would need to respond positively to the neighbouring buildings. It would also be important to consider the established pedestrian flows and use of the area to retain and improve accessibility and connectivity.

With regards to the Post Office building, much like Freedom House it forms part of the original new town development, but would benefit from redevelopment to enhance the setting of East Square and Brooke House.

#### **Summary of regeneration opportunities for East Square**

**Reinstatement of the original lattice paving design.**

**Improved street furniture, possibly responding to the original bespoke bench.**

**Introduce a lighting scheme to encourage use of the square.**

**Encourage outside uses by providing cafes and other leisure uses.**

**Redevelopment of the post office building and Freedom House to provide improved facilities and aesthetic quality.**

**Improve accessibility into and around the square, particularly from North Gunnels.**



**Fig 26** (top): Historical photo showing the original paving design of East Square at the foot of Brooke House.

**Fig 27** (bottom): East Square showing its current modern surface treatment and Freedom House in the foreground, 2011.

## 5.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 NATIONAL POLICY

#### Legislation

Legislation relating to buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest is contained in the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act). Section 66 of the Acts notes that special regard must be given by the decision makers in the planning process to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings and their settings.

#### National Policy

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, was published in January 2005 and sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It acknowledges the positive contribution high quality design can make in the place making process by responding to local context whilst creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness.

The national policy framework applicable to the historic built environment is contained in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, issued in March 2010. PPS5 is supported by guidance in a document called Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (HEPPG), also issued in March 2010. PPS5 merges listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments into one category of Designated Heritage Assets for the purposes of national policy.

PPS5 sets out the Government's objectives in paragraph 7 as being (in summary) to:

- Deliver sustainable development.
- Conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- Contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past (this applies in particular to excavation of archaeological sites and to demolition of buildings).

Development management is addressed in Policies HE6 to HE12 of PPS5, beginning with the information requirements for applications for consent affecting heritage assets in Policy HE6.

Paragraph HE6.1 indicates that in describing the significance of a heritage asset, the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be subject to two considerations:

- i It should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset.

- ii It should be no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact on the significance of the heritage asset. Given that the potential impact in this case is indirect - that is, a visual effect on the setting of the heritage assets - the key issue is the significance of the heritage asset in its wider context, taking into account relationships with its surroundings (and bearing in mind that significance usually begins with and stems from the physical attributes of the heritage asset itself).

Policy HE7 establishes the policy principles guiding the determination of applications, and notes those things that should be taken into account. These include any designation records (such as list descriptions), the heritage assets themselves, and the outcome of the usual consultations with interested parties.

HE9.2 -9.3 relate to substantial harm and demolition. Where substantial harm or total loss of significance will occur, it should be demonstrated that the loss of significance is necessary in order to deliver sustainable public benefits, which outweigh harm or loss, or the nature of the heritage asset prevent all reasonable uses of the site and no viable use can be found in the medium term to enable its conservation.

Policy HE9.4 relates to less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets. The policy recognises that public benefits can outweigh harm and that the greater the harm to the significance the greater the justification required.

Policy HE10 provides additional principles when considering developments effecting the setting of designated heritage assets. It suggests the need to identify opportunities for changes that enhance or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset and such opportunities should be seen a public benefits and part of the process of place-shaping.

#### Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Consultation of the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was undertaken in July 2011. Paragraphs 176-191 relate directly to the management of the Historic Environment.

While the document carries limited weight at the present time, adoption of the NPPF would replace PPS5 as the primary, national policy framework for the historic environment and it is therefore identified as a material consideration for the present application.

Historic environment policies in the NPPF broadly reflect those of PPS 5, putting the same weight, for example, on the need for information in determining applications, stating that local **planning authorities should, 'require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting'.**

## 5.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 5.2 STRATEGIC AND LOCAL POLICY

#### Strategic Policies

The Localism Bill was published by Central Government on the 21 December 2010. Clause 89 (3) of the bill states the government's intentions to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies. On 15 November 2011 the Bill received Royal Assent, the Localism Act will enable the Government to carry out the intentions of the Bill and is a material planning consideration.

The East of England Development Plan 2004 contains the spatial strategy for the East of England. The policy relevant to the historic environment is as follows:

#### **POLICY ENV6: THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

In their plans, policies, programmes and proposals local planning authorities and other agencies should identify, Protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment of the region, its archaeology, historic Buildings, places and landscapes, including historic parks and gardens and those features and sites (and their Settings) especially significant in the East of England.

#### Local Policy

Basildon Council's Development strategy is contained within the save policies (2007) of the Basildon District Local Plan (1998). There are no saved policies relating to the historic environment.

Basildon Development Control Policies are contained in the draft Replacement Local Plan Redeposit (RLP) June 2006, these should be treated as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, until such time as the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Documents are adopted. The policy most relevant to the historic built environment is as follows:

#### **POLICY BAS BE5 LISTED BUILDINGS**

1. Listed Building Consent for the demolition of part or all of a listed building will be refused.
2. Listed Building Consent for the alteration or extension to a Listed Building will only be permitted where its character and appearance will not be materially harmed.
3. Consent for the change of use of a Listed Building will only be granted where such a use would not cause harm to its special architectural or historic interest, including its setting.

4. In considering planning applications for development adjacent, or close to, a Listed Building, the Council will have regard to its likely impact on the setting of the Listed Building. Planning permission will not be granted for development having a significantly adverse effect on the building or its setting.

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance

##### **Basildon Town Centre Development Framework 2006**

Published by Basildon Borough Council, this document sets out the long-term vision for Basildon. Guiding change through identifying areas for improvement to ensure that growth and development take place in a coordinated way.

#### Other Guidance

##### **Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance, English Heritage, 2008**

Conservation Principles was published by English Heritage in 2008. The guidance within it relates to the sustainable management of the historic environment. English Heritage state the main purpose for producing the document 'is to strengthen the credibility and consistency of decisions taken and advice given by English Heritage staff'. Despite being a document primarily for English Heritage staff to work to, this document is also a valuable resource for others in the heritage sector for managing change in the historic environment and focusing attention on the key issues involved in 'constructive conservation'.

Four key values are ascribed to heritage assets (pages 27 to 32 of the document), and understanding these values is fundamental to understanding the significance of a place. The four values are:

- Evidential value - the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value - ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.
- Aesthetic value - deriving from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value - deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Heritage values are subject to further considerations such as understanding the fabric and evolution of the place, consideration of the relative importance of the values that have been identified, and by matters such as setting, context and comparative studies.

##### **The Setting of Heritage Assets, English Heritage, 2010**

Between August and November 2010, English Heritage invited views on its draft guidance 'The Setting of Heritage Assets: English Heritage Guidance'. The consultation is now closed and the revised guidance will be published later in 2011. The document will provide the basis for English Heritage advice on the setting of heritage assets when responding to consultations by third parties and when assessing the implications of development proposals upon historic places.

##### **By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System - Towards Better Practice, Communities and Local Government, May 2000**

This guide is intended as a companion to Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) [and subsequent Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)] and aims to encourage better design and to stimulate thinking about urban design. The guide is relevant to all aspects of the built environment, from the design of buildings and spaces, landscapes, to transport systems; and for planning and development at every scale, from streets and their neighbourhoods, villages and cities, to regional planning strategies.

##### **Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas, English Heritage & CABE, 2002**

The publication, showcases fifteen case studies showing how new buildings have responded positively to their historic surroundings, creating places that are attractive, popular and successful. The publication is fully illustrated and offers advice for people embarking on projects in sensitive locations, as well as providing an interesting account of current architectural thinking.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

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Basildon Town Centre is to undergo a period of change and transformation through a programme of regeneration and redevelopment. The objectives of the proposals include the provision of new homes, jobs and community facilities, creating high quality public realm and quality retail and leisure provisions and choice for local people as well as creating a destination of choice.

As one of the first of the New Towns the design concept of the town contributes to its character and many of the buildings have become iconic to Basildon and recognised for their architectural and historic interest.

**Regeneration proposal should be reinforced by Basildon's New Town heritage, buildings and features which contribute to its character and sense of place.** The heritage assets identified within this report can inform the regeneration process and offer significant opportunities for enhancement.

### Designated Heritage Assets

The designated heritage assets identified within Basildon Town Centre include Brooke House, a 1960s, residential tower block and townscape features within its immediate setting. These include the ramps, steps, stairs, bespoke staircase and bench within East Square, in addition, the raised pool with the Mother and Child sculpture and fountain within Town Square. These assets have been assessed in terms of their architectural and historic interest in order to understand their significance both as independent assets as well as a set piece of planned townscape.

Whilst Brooke House would appear the principal listed asset, the surrounding townscape features are intrinsic to its original planned setting. For this reason they have significant townscape value, which should be used to inform future redevelopment proposals.

Brooke House and the surrounding assets are in a reasonable state of repair, but would benefit from restoration and minor repairs. Particular opportunities for enhancement include reinstatement of the original paving design within East Square, which would significantly improve its appearance as well as the setting of Brooke House. In addition, the replacement of paving around Brooke House and the removal of the red brick retaining wall impairing the broad steps, would significantly improve the presentation of Brooke House and improve connectivity into the square.

The reinstatement of the original broad steps leading into East Square would also offer significant enhancements in terms of reinstating the original arrangement associated with Brooke House.

### The Setting of Brooke House and East Square

Development opportunities have been identified within the setting of the designated heritage assets, the buildings which surround East Square appear to be of limited architectural merit. Both the Post Office building to the north and Freedom House to the east of East Square both provide the opportunities to introduction of a well designed contemporary development which responds positively to existing townscape scale and arrangement. This would also offer the ideal catalyst to encourage positive use of East Square. Furthermore leisure and residential uses could foster the vitality of East Square beyond day light hours providing positive activity, vibrancy and surveillance.

### Post Office Building and Freedom House

The Post Office building is a mid-rise block extending to five storeys, with single story addition extending rearward to the north-east. The principal frontage of the building faces East Square, whilst the single storey elements to the rear are serviceable areas, creating largely inactive fronts.

The Post Office building does not exhibit defining architectural characteristics of the New Town era. Its form, proportions, details and materials do not appear comparable to buildings of a similar period within Basildon town centre. For instance, its vertical proportions contrast visibly with the horizontal form of its neighbour Freedom House, nor does it exhibit distinctive details or materials such as the white and black marble panels or decorative glazing found on other buildings.

The site presents substantial enhancement opportunities to introduce new buildings of architectural and aesthetic quality, as well as creating more dynamic and active facades. A scheme within this area could also incorporate additional pedestrian access into East Square, encouraging increased activity levels and surveillance.

In order to facilitate public use and activity within East Square, cafés, leisure provisions, improved illumination and street furniture could be introduced. Development proposals for both the post office and Freedom House should, as far as possible, preserve the form and features of East Square.

### Town Square

The north side of Town Square is composed of a parade of shops residing directly to the west of Brooke House which act as a plinth and part of the original architectural composition and setting of Brooke House. Whilst not completely discouraged any proposals should consider the scale and arrangement of the buildings, their relationship with Brooke House as well as distinguishing materials, such as white and black marble façades, glazing and cloister style frontages.

### Summary

The New Town heritage assets within Basildon have the potential to complement the regeneration proposal for Basildon town centre. Brooke House, Town Square and East Square are principal elements of the New Town and should inform and contribute to the new era of the town.

Significant development opportunities within the setting of these assets have been identified as well as the opportunities to introduce high quality contemporary architecture act as a catalyst to deliver high quality public realm and vitality.

## 7.0 REFERENCES

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### Journal Articles

'Tower block, Basildon', *The architect and building news*, 223, 7 (13 February 1963), pp. 239-243

'New look at Basildon town centre', Kenneth Browne, *the architectural review*, 132, 789 (November 1962), pp. 332-336

'Shops and flats at Basildon', *architects' journal*, 136, 25 (19 December 1962), pp. 1381-1390.

### Books

Planning for Man and Motor, 1964, pp. 221

### Online Resources

Images of England

URL: <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk> [Accessed 24/08/2011]

Basildon History

URL: <http://www.basildon.com/history/home.html> [23/08/2011]

URL: <http://www.basildon.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2450> [23/08/2011]

Essex Archive online

URL: <http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk> [23/08/2011]

Basildon Town Centre Regeneration

URL: <http://www.basildontowncentre.com> [23/08/2011]

### Stakeholder Responses

Basildon Borough Council Planning Service:

1 August 2011, comments from Matthew Winslow – Senior Planning Officer Forward Plans & David Lewis – Development Control Manager.

Essex County Council:

18 July 2011, comments from Robin Carpenter, Historic Buildings Advisor.

English Heritage:

18 August 2011, comments from Michael Munt, Historic Areas Adviser for Essex.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST DESCRIPTIONS

**IoE Number:472020**

**Location: Brooke House, 1-84 Town Square**

**Basildon, Basildon, Essex**

**Date listed:22 December 1998**

**Date of last amendment:22 December 1998**

**Grade II**

TQ 78 NW BASILDON TOWN SQUARE 717/6/10010 Nos.1-84 (Consecutive) Brooke House GV II Tower block of 14 storey flats, 1960-62, Architect Anthony B Davies, chief architect and planner to Basildon Development Corporation. Sir Basil Spence, consultant adviser on town centre; Ove Arup and Partners, structural engineers. Concrete, with dark brown handmade brick cladding and aluminium glazed screens and windows. Rectangular plan, with 6 flats on each floor, with central access corridor and staircases at each end of building, recessed rectangular entrance on ground floor. Block raised 8m above ground on 8 'V'-shaped fairfaced reinforced concrete pilotis, supporting flat reinforced concrete floor slab at base of flats; reinforced concrete structural cores and main crosswalls, hollow tile and reinforced concrete floors and flat hollow tile and reinforced concrete roof, reinforced concrete rooftop pergola. The visually reticent entrance, a glazed box with aluminium framing is recessed beneath the north side of the building. The main block has a uniform brown brick cladding, rising sheer on the north and south ends of the building to either side of the full height recessed glazed staircases. The principal east and west facades are identically treated with flat, low brown brick spandrels, above which are set aluminium-framed windows with a shallow 'V' plan, repeated across the width of the block. Some interiors retain wood panelling to living rooms. To north, fully glazed staircase between ground and lower ground floor with separate entrance houses fire escape stair. Lower ground reached via stairs and ramps incorporated into dark red-brown brick retaining wall to north. To east, steps leading down to East Square are a part of Davies's composition, as is a ramp enclosed by cobbled retaining walls. Brooke House was designed to introduce high density residential accommodation into Basildon town centre, and visually to provide a dominant vertical landmark to counterbalance the predominantly horizontal emphasis of the surrounding shops:

The bold and subtly profiled pilotis, together with the siting of the block forward of the adjacent building line to the west, and facing the sunken square to the east, gives a significant townscape role to the building. Brooke House was named after the then Minister of Housing and Local Government,

Henry Brooke MP. Part of a group with Raised Pool and Sculpture in Town Square (qv) and retaining walls, ramps, steps, staircases, bench and raised paving in East Square (qv). {Architectural Review: Browne K: A new look at Basildon Town Centre, November 1962: 332- 335; Planning for Man and Motor, London: Ritter P: Basildon New Town Main Centre: Pergamon Press: 1964-: 221; Architects Journal: Shops and flats at Basildon, 10 December 1962: 1962-: 1381- 9; Architect and Building News, 13 February 1963: Tower block, Basildon: 1963-: 239-43).

**IoE Number:472021**

**Location: retaining walls, ramp, steps, staircases, bench and raised paving, East Square**

**Basildon, Basildon, Essex**

**Date listed:22 December 1998**

**Date of last amendment:22 December 1998**

**Grade II**

TQ 78 NW BASILDON EAST SQUARE 717/6/10008 Retaining walls, ramp, steps, staircases, bench and raised paving GV II Townscape designed in conjunction with Brooke House, 1962, Architect Anthony B Davies, chief architect and planner to Basildon Development Corporation; Sir Basil Spence, consultant adviser Oil town centre. Sunken square designed to complement Brooke House. Broad flight of steps to lower level along west side, curved ramp with cobble clad retaining walls and concrete coping to parapet, in front of steps, and upper ramp, also with cobble cladding to retaining walls, with painted steel railings and hardwood handrail above. East side has double 'row' shops at ground and first floor (part of Freedom House and not included in listing), with projecting 'L' plan reinforced concrete staircase, with precast treads on cranked r.c. carriage beam and with painted steel railings, with hardwood handrail, above. At foot of staircase is purpose-designed bench with vertical slats of teak fixed to a light tubular steel framework. Part of a group with Brooke House (qv) which it is designed

(Architectural Review: Browne K: A new look at Basildon Town Centre, November 1962: 332- 335; Planning for Man and Motor, London: Ritter P: Basildon New Town Main Centre: Pergamon Press: 1964-: 221; Architects Journal: Shops and flats at Basildon, 10 December 1962: 1962-: 1381- 9; Architect and Building News, 13 February 1963: Tower block, Basildon: 1963-: 239-43).

**IoE Number:472060**

**Location: raised pool and sculpture, Town Square**

**Basildon, Basildon, Essex**

**Date listed:22 December 1998**

**Date of last amendment:22 December 1998**

**Grade II**

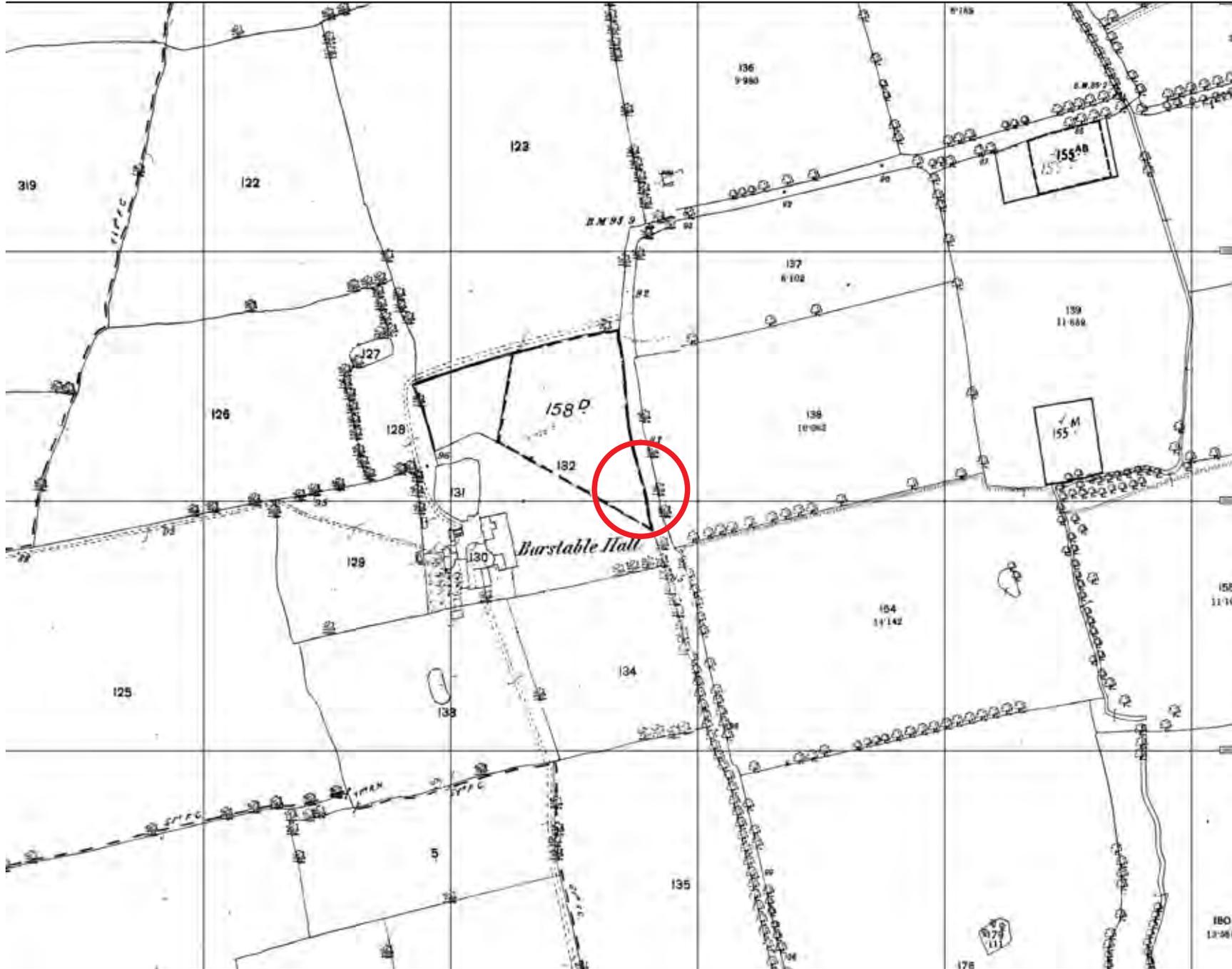
TQ 78 NW BASILDON TOWN SQUARE 717/6/10009 Raised Pool and Sculpture GV II Pool, with sculpture immediately to the west and south of the piloti undercroft of Brooke House, 1962, Architect Anthony B Davies, chief Architect and planner to Basildon. Development Corporation; Sir Basil Spence, consultant adviser on town centre. Long rectangular pool, with raised granite-clad sides and coping, within which is set, at the east end, a bronze sculpture, 'Mother and Child', and fountain, by Maurice Lambert. The pool was designed as a foreground to Brooke House (qv). (Architectural Review: Browne K: A new look at Basildon Town Centre, November 1962: 332- 335; Planning for Man and Motor, London: Ritter P: Basildon New Town Main Centre: Pergamon Press: 1964-: 221; Architects Journal: Shops and flats at Basildon, 10 December 1962: 1962-: 1381- 9; Architect and Building News, 13 February 1963: Tower block, Basildon: 1963-: 239-43).



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Figure 1: Site Location



Additional information:

 Site Boundary



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Figure 2: 1868-1885 Ordnance Survey



Additional information:

 Site Boundary



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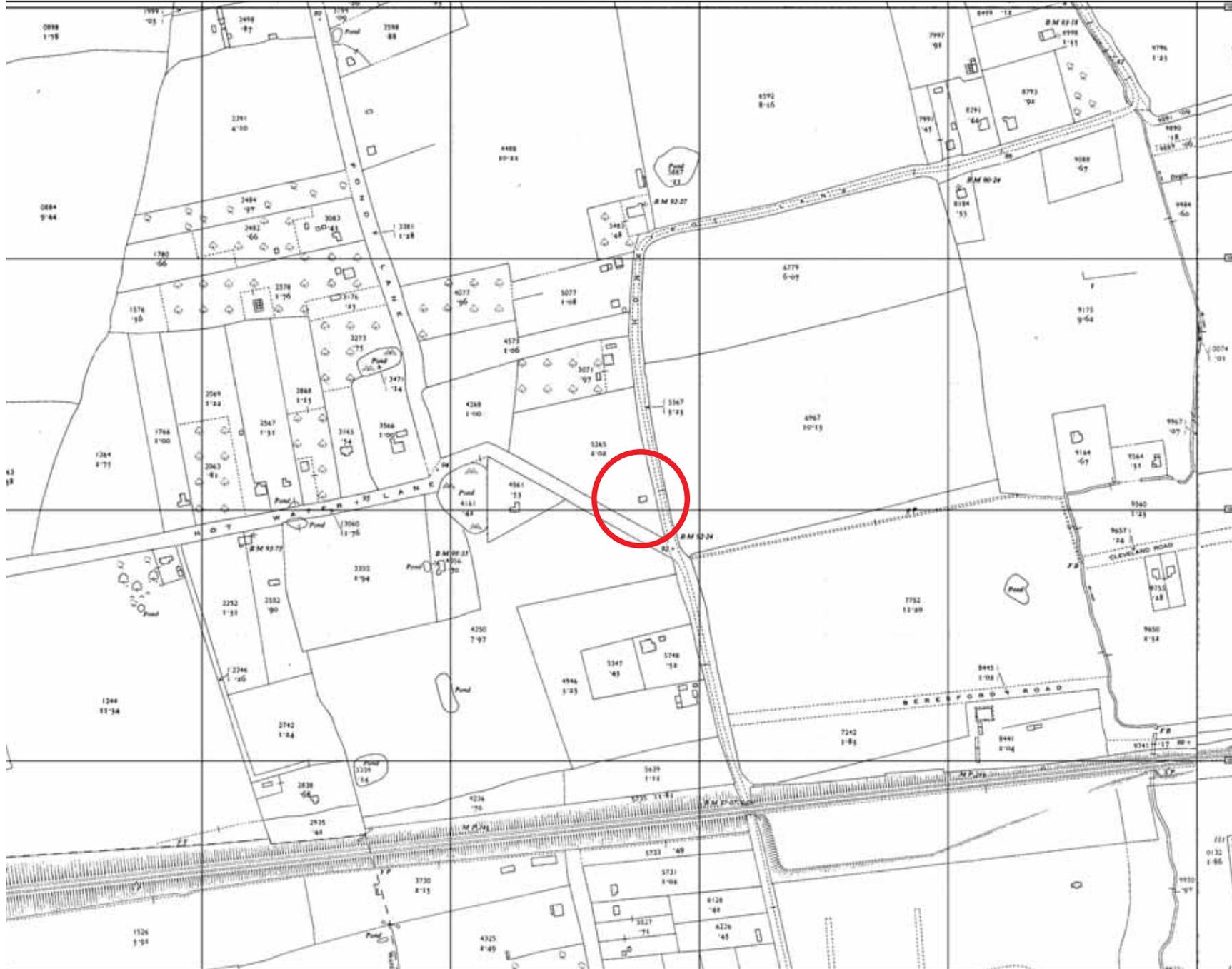
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Figure 3: 1923-1924 Ordnance Survey



Additional information:

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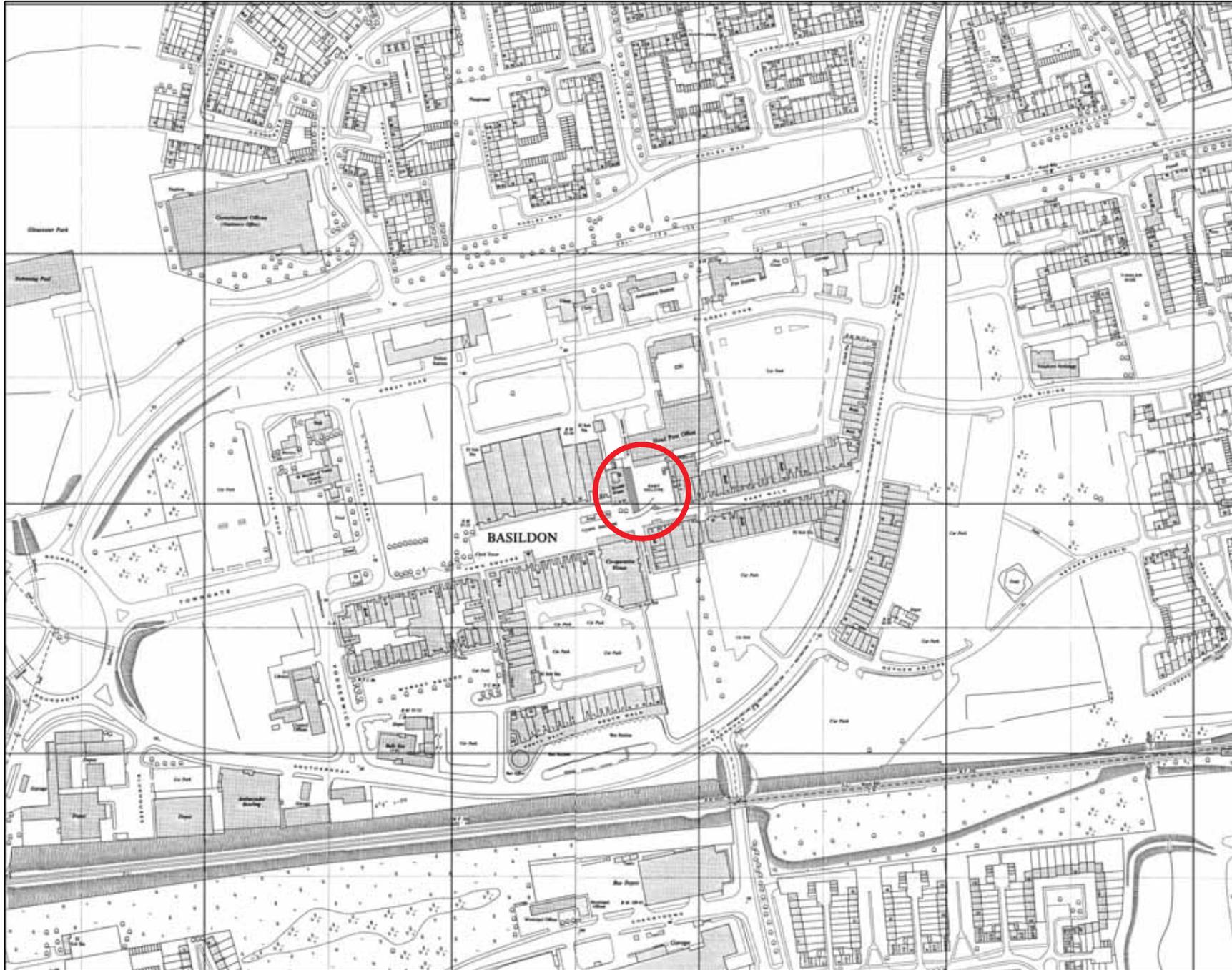


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Figure 4: 1956 Ordnance Survey



Additional information:

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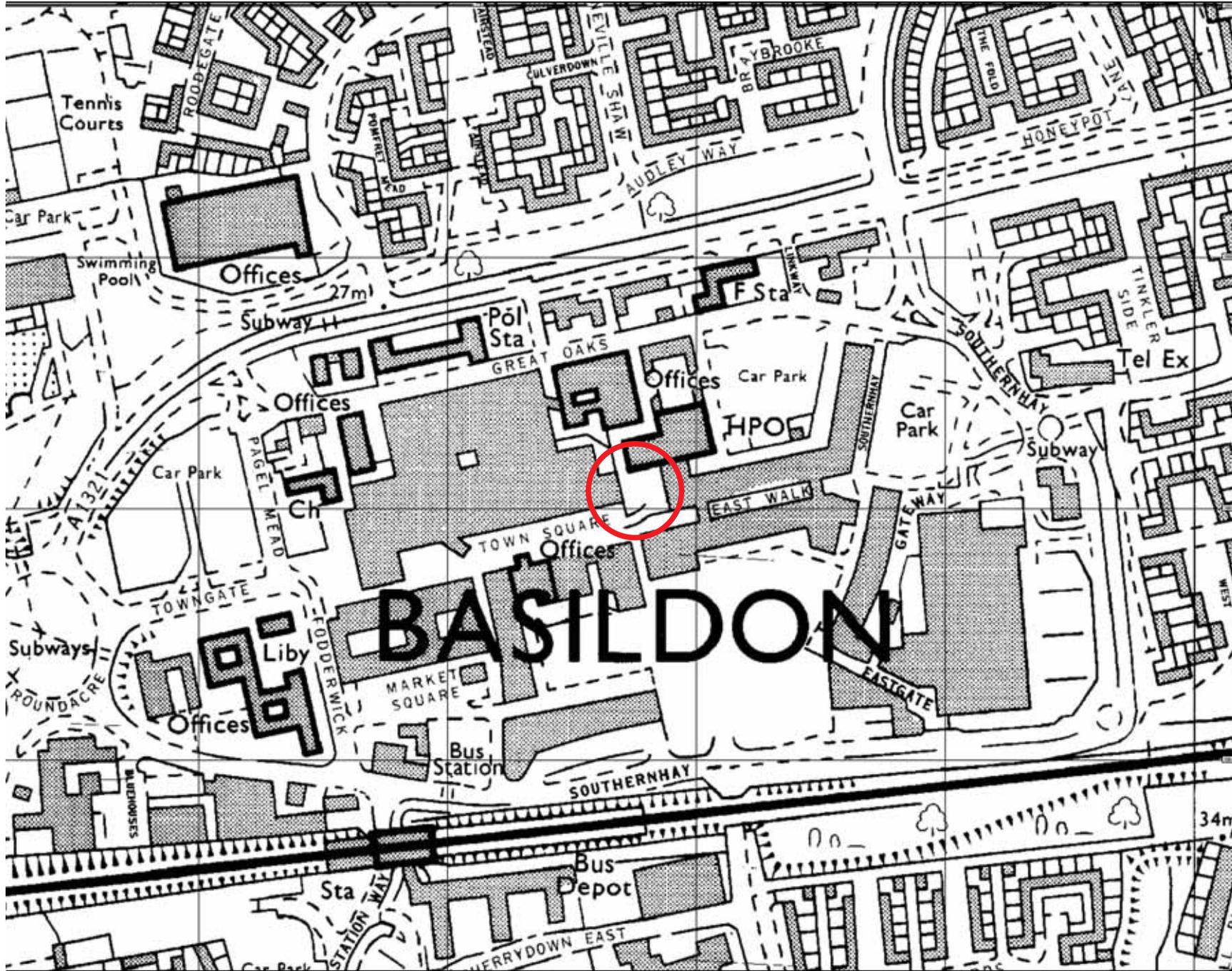
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Figure 5: 1967-1968 Ordnance Survey



Additional information:

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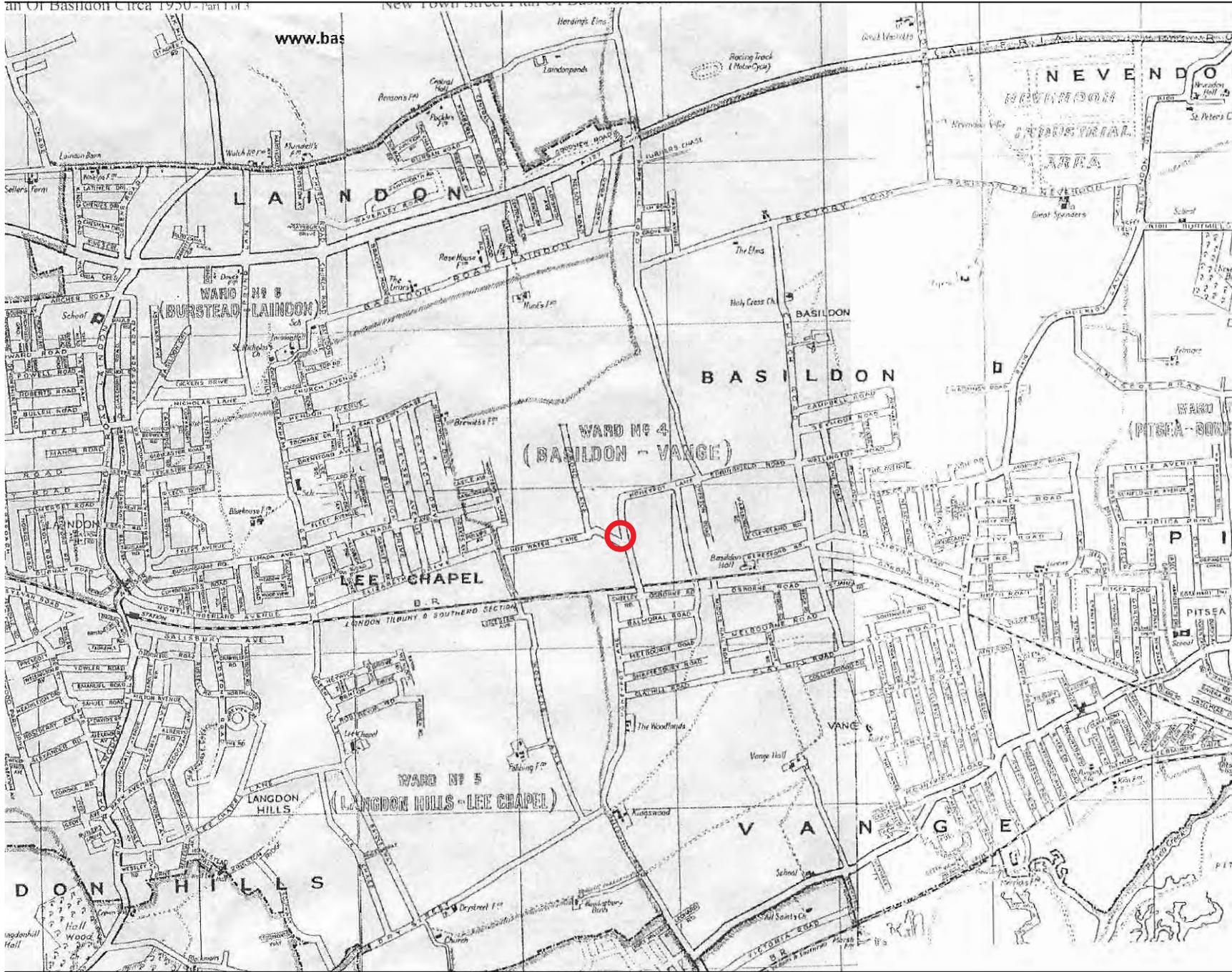
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Figure 6: 1985 Ordnance Survey



Additional information:

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Figure 7: Barnett's Street Plan of Basildon New Town Area c.1950



Additional information:

— Listed Elements

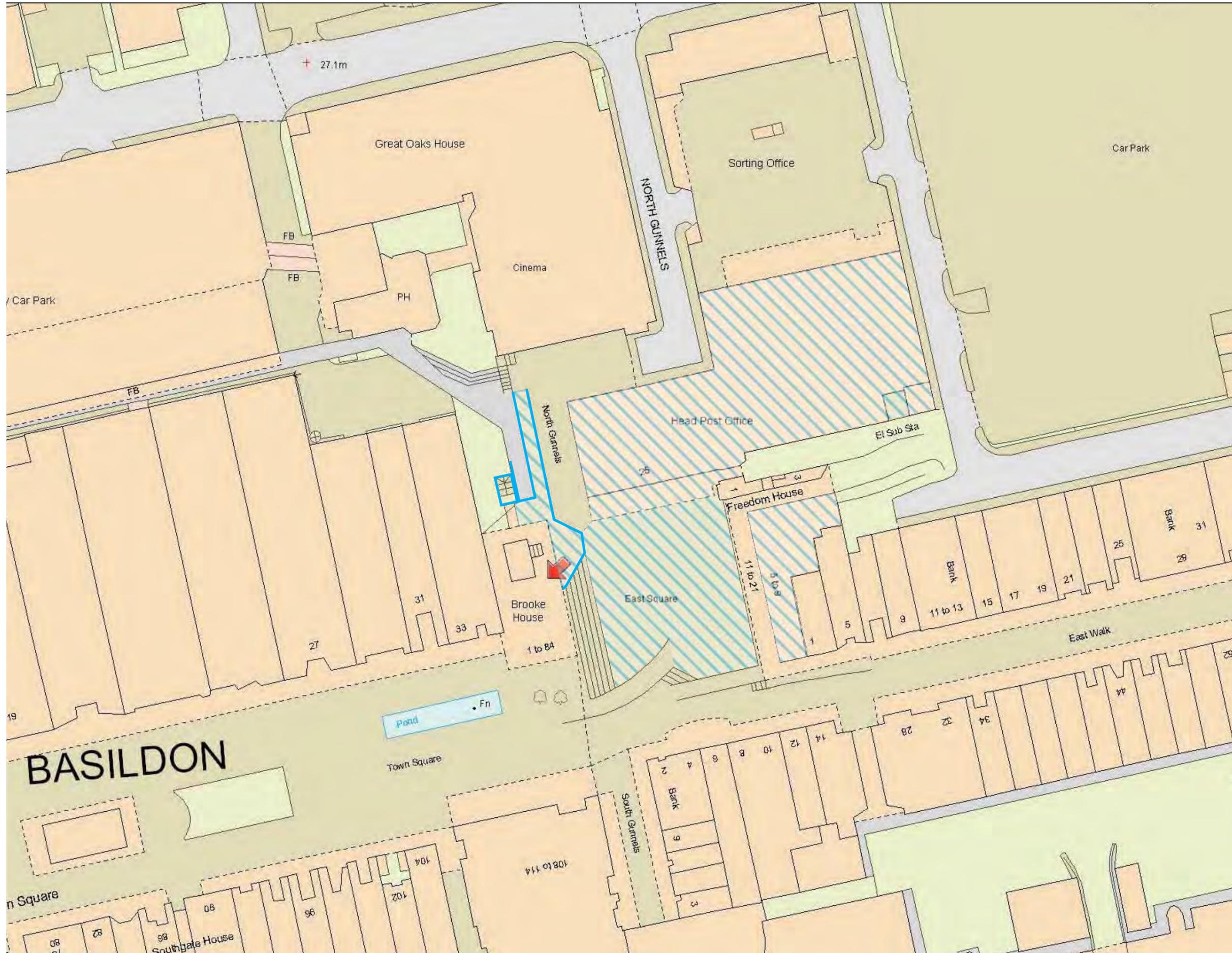


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Figure 8: Designated Heritage Assets within Basildon Town Centre



Additional information:

 Heritage Development Opportunities



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Figure 9: Heritage Development Opportunities within Basildon Town Centre



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Figure 10: Important Views within Basildon Town Centre

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