



There has been a village on or near the site of present day Saffron Walden since before the Roman occupation of Britain, when Bronze and Iron Age tribes settled in the area. After the Romans withdrew from the country, a flourishing Anglo-Saxon town was established. Following the Norman Conquest the manor was allocated to the De Mandevilles who most probably built the castle that dominated the area. All that remains today is the ruined basement. During the Middle Ages the growth of the cloth industry had an impact on the town. The nearby Abbey kept flocks of sheep and it was at about this time that the name Saffron was added to Walden when it became the major English centre for the production of the valuable crocus sativus crop used to produce dye for the cloth trade, food colouring and medicine.

Saffron Walden's rich heritage and wealth is reflected in the large number of old buildings whilst retaining the original medieval street layout. Bridge End, Castle Street, Myddytton Place and Church Street display many timbered houses dating from the 15th century, of which the Youth Hostel and the Old Sun Inn are outstanding examples. Why not follow this trail and discover the hidden gems located in the cobbled streets of this charming town?



#### Attractions along the route

##### 1. Market Place

The market is still held here on Tuesdays and Saturdays as it has been since the 13th century. The Market Place is dominated by Victorian buildings. Barclays Bank was designed by Eden Nesfield as a bank for Gibson & Co. in 1874. The stone portico and timber framed additions to the Georgian Town Hall were designed by Edward Burgess and were a gift to the town from George Stacey Gibson in 1879. The Tourist Information Centre is housed here. The drinking fountain was also a gift to the town from the Gibson family in 1863 to commemorate the marriage of The Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. The Library, once The Corn Exchange, is of Italianate style designed by Richard Tress and completed in 1848.

##### 2. The Old Sun Inn

The crossroads at which the Old Sun Inn stands has timber framed buildings on all four corners. The Old Sun Inn is a range of Grade I listed homes and shops dating from the 14th century with many different types of decorative plaster work called 'pargetting'. These include incised repeat patterns, some freehand designs and later bas-relief of birds and fruit, possibly dating to 1676. The end gable shows two figures and opinion is divided as to whether they are Tom Hickathrift and The Wisbech Giant or Gog and Magog.

##### 3. Saffron Walden Museum and castle ruins

The museum collections are housed in one of the oldest purpose built museum buildings in the country, completed in 1835. Its ethnographic collection is of national importance. It has everything from mammoth tusks to mummies, from an early Tudor bed to a natural history museum gallery. The castle ruins are located in the grassy grounds and make a perfect setting for a picnic.

Tel: 01799 510333

##### 4. Castle Street

This street was part of the new town plan of the 1230s but most of the timber framed hall houses now date from around 1500. Some of the houses are Grade II\* listed properties with many examples of ancient and modern pargetting. There are a number of unusual Wealden houses, the easiest to identify is at No 49/51. This style of hall house under a single roof is normally associated with Kent. The house also has sliding sash windows which are commonly found in Saffron Walden houses. By the 1800s this was the poorer section of town with

many of the houses divided into small cottages. Clear breaks in the roof lines give clues as to the extent of the original houses.

##### 5. Bridge End Garden

A series of seven interlinked gardens laid out by the Gibson family in the nineteenth century. These Grade II listed gardens are open to the public each day free of charge. Careful restoration has replicated gardening techniques and designs typical of the Victorian era and has brought the garden back to its full splendour.

Tel: 01799 524002

##### 6. The Fry Art Gallery

Situated in the centre of Saffron Walden, the gallery houses an impressive number of paintings, prints, illustrations and decorative designs by artists of the 20th century including Edward Bawden RA, Eric Ravilious, Michael Rothe RA, Kenneth Rowntree and others.

Tel: 01799 513779

[www.fryartgallery.org](http://www.fryartgallery.org)

##### 7. Youth Hostel and The Close

The Youth Hostel is Grade I listed and is one of the finest medieval buildings in the town. It was built as a combined shop, home and warehouse in the 1490s. There is a fine doorway into Bridge Street and a carved dragon post on the corner. The sack hoist in the roof was added in the early nineteenth century when part of the building was converted to a malting. Diagonally across the road from the Youth Hostel stands The Close, a fine late fifteenth century timber framed house with later additions including an unusual seventeenth century 'Spider' window.

##### 8. Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin

The earliest features of the largest parish church in Essex date from 1250 but the majority of the church was rebuilt in the Perpendicular Style around 1450 under the supervision of John Wastell, who also designed King's College Chapel in Cambridge. With a total length of nearly 200 feet and a spire of 193 feet this church stands proud overlooking the historic market town. Among the monuments are Lord Audley's Belgian slate tomb in the south chapel and R.A. Butler's memorial plaque, his grave being at the east end of the churchyard.

Tel: 01799 506024

[www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org](http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org)

##### 9. The Cross Keys

The Cross Keys is a fifteenth century timber framed former house and shop with later additions. The roof was raised in the early nineteenth century and new windows added on the ground and first floors of the King Street frontage. The plaster on the entire timber framed section was taken off in the early twentieth century and some first floor windows reinstated. At the corner of King Street and High Street on the ground floor are two of the original fifteenth century shop windows.

##### 10. The Rows

At the start of the Rows, on the corner of King Street and Cross Street stands a large late fifteenth century hall house. The house shows clearly how large houses were divided into three different elements with the open hall section having its roof raised in the eighteenth century. The Rows were the town's shopping centre from medieval times onwards. On Cross Street are some of the best preserved Tudor shop windows.

##### 11. Audley End House and Gardens

Built by Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk to entertain King James I, Audley End is one of England's most magnificent stately homes. Enjoy over 30 lavishly decorated room interiors by Robert Adam and a wonderful collection of paintings and furnishings. Explore the beautiful Elysian garden, 19th century parterre with its elaborate floral displays and the organic Kitchen Garden.

Tel: 01799 522399

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

##### 12. Audley End Miniature Railway

Lord Braybrooke's private 1.5 mile railway through mature woodland adjacent to Audley End House. A wonderful addition to your day at Audley End.

Tel: 01799 541354

[www.audley-end-railway.co.uk](http://www.audley-end-railway.co.uk)



#### Getting to Saffron Walden

##### Arriving by Road

Travel on the M11 if travelling from London or the south. At junction 8 either take the A120 then B184 via Thaxted or the B1383 via Stansted Mountfitchet and Newport. Alternatively exit at junction 9 and travel south on the B184 via Great Chesterford. If travelling from the north, arrive via the M11 taking the A505 at junction 10, then the A1301 and B184.

##### Arriving by Train

Saffron Walden is served by a frequent National Express East Anglia rail service directly from London Liverpool Street to Audley End Station. For more information please call 0845 600 7245 or visit [www.nationalexpress-eastanglia.com](http://www.nationalexpress-eastanglia.com)

Travel information can also be obtained by calling 0871 200 2233 or visiting [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

#### Essex



#### Accommodation

##### 1 Bell House

★★★★ B&B  
Saffron Walden CB10 1BD  
Tel: 01799 527857

##### 2 Coach House

★★★★ Self-catering  
Saffron Walden CB10 1BP  
Tel: 01799 523202

##### 3 Saffron Hotel

★★★ Hotel  
Saffron Walden CB10 1AZ  
Tel: 01799 522676  
[www.saffronhotel.co.uk](http://www.saffronhotel.co.uk)

#### Tourist information

##### Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre

Tel: 01799 524003  
Email: [tourism@saffronwalden.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@saffronwalden.gov.uk)  
[www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk](http://www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk)

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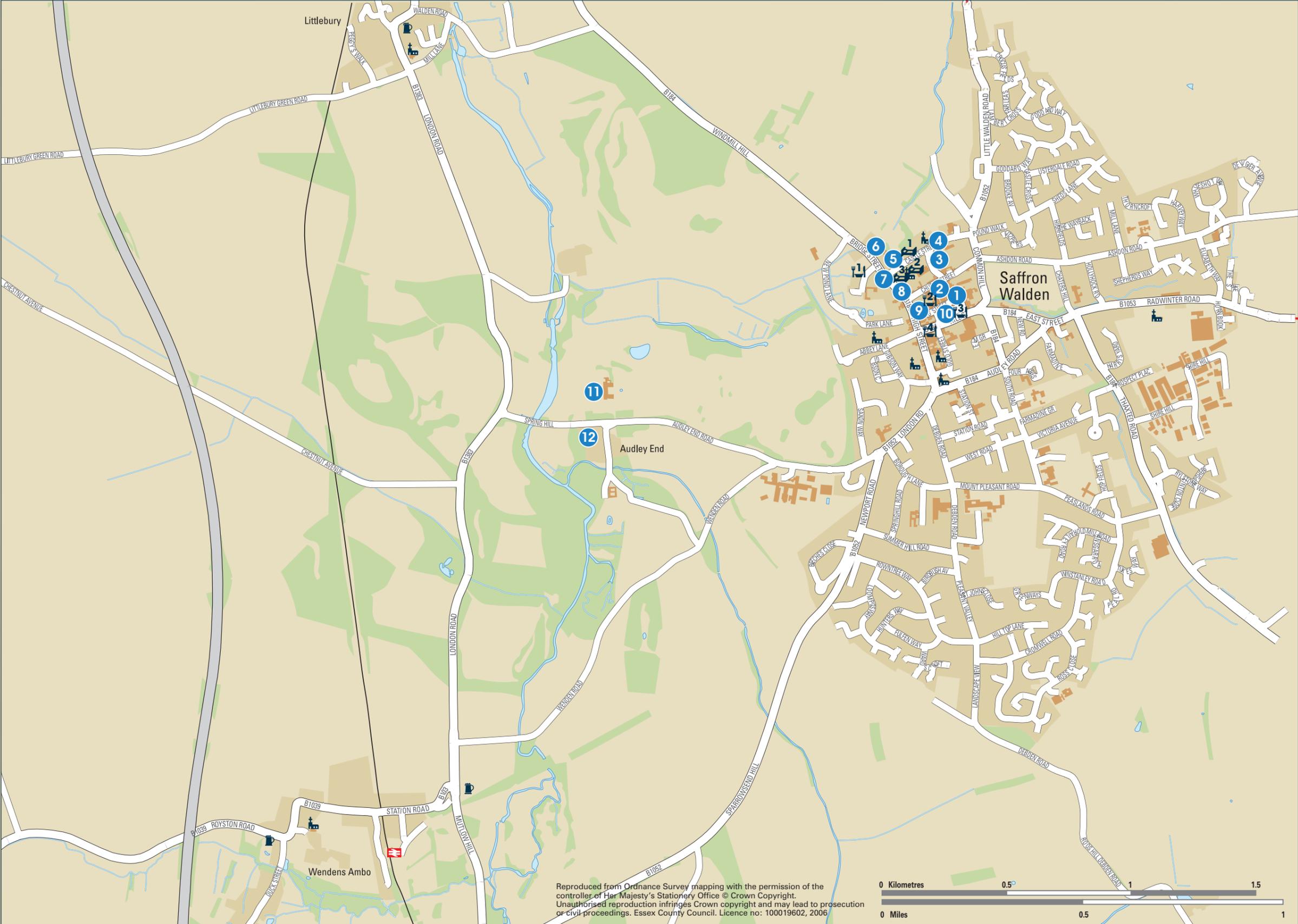
## English Heritage and historic Essex



Saffron Walden town trail

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## Saffron Walden town trail



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### Attractions along this route

- 1 Market Place
- 2 The Old Sun Inn
- 3 Saffron Walden Museum and Castle Ruins
- 4 Castle Street
- 5 Bridge End Garden
- 6 The Fry Art Gallery
- 7 Youth Hostel and The Close
- 8 Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin
- 9 The Cross Keys
- 10 The Rows
- 11 Audley End House and Gardens
- 12 Audley End Miniature Railway

### Accommodation

for details see overleaf

- 1 Bell House
- 2 The Coach House
- 3 Saffron Hotel

### Places to eat

- 1 The Eight Bells  
01799 522790  
www.8bells.co.uk
- 2 The Restaurant on Church Street  
Tel: 01799 526444  
www.trocs.co.uk
- 3 Dish  
Tel: 01799 513300  
www.dishrestaurant.co.uk
- 4 Cafe Cou Cou  
01799 513863

This map is intended as a guide only. Please refer to relevant OS Explorer maps for specific details.

### Key

- Place of worship
- Telephone in rural area
- Public House
- National Rail
- Accommodation
- Restaurants