

Somerton Conservation Area Appraisal

Introduction

Why have Conservation Areas?

A review of policies relating to the historic environment carried out by Historic England (then known as English Heritage) on behalf of the Secretary of States for Culture Media and Sport and the Environment Transport and the Regions was published in December 2000 under the heading 'Power of Place'.

The Report which reflected views now held generally by the population at large, confirmed 5 main messages

- i Most people place a high value on the historic environment and think it right there should be public funding to preserve it.
- ii Because people care about their environment they want to be involved in decisions affecting it.
- iii The historic environment is seen by most people as a totality. They care about the whole of their environment.
- iv Everyone has a part to play caring for the historic environment. More will be achieved if we work together.
- v Everything rests in sound knowledge and understanding and takes account of the values people place on their surroundings.

In summary we must balance the need to care for the historic environment with the need for change. We need to understand the character of places and the significance people ascribe to them.

The concept of Conservation Areas was first introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967, in which local planning authorities were encouraged to determine which parts of their area could be defined as "Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

The importance of the 1967 Act was for the first time recognition was given to the architectural or historic interest, not only of individual buildings but also to groups of buildings: the relationship of one building to another and the quality and the character of the spaces between them.

The duty of local planning authorities to designate Conservation Areas was embodied in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, Section 277. Since then further legislation has sought to strengthen and protect these areas by reinforcing already established measures of planning control in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and now reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Unlike Listed Buildings, which are selected on national standards, the designation of Conservation Areas in the main is carried out at District level based upon criteria of local distinctiveness and the historic interest of an area as a whole. However, in the past, the criteria adopted by different local authorities in determining what constitutes a special area have tended to vary widely. For example, although public opinion seems to be overwhelmingly in favour of conserving and enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene, what is familiar to many, may only be cherished by some.

Over the last 30 years this approach has changed significantly. Much greater emphasis is now placed on involving the local community in evaluating 'what makes an area special', whether it should be designated and where boundaries should be drawn.

It is now recognised that the historical combination of local architectural style and the use of indigenous materials within the wider local landscape creates what has been termed 'local distinctiveness'. Distinctiveness varies within the relatively restricted confines of individual counties, which in turn are distinct in terms of the country as a whole.

Conservation Area designation for settlements and wider areas which embody this local distinctiveness may afford them protection against development which bears no relation to the locality either in terms of the buildings within it or landscape surrounding it.

The historical development of such settlements and their surrounding landscape are the 'journals' through which the social and economic development of the locality can be traced. The pattern of agricultural and industrial progress of settlements (their social history) is by definition expressed in the architecture and landscape of any area – the historic environment.

It is not intended (nor would it be desirable) to use Conservation Area designation as a way of preventing or restricting development, the expansion of a settlement or preventing contemporary innovative design. Logically in the future new development should add to, rather than detract from the character of an area and will in turn help to chart historical development. However, all development should seek to preserve and/or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Aims and objectives

Somerton Conservation Area was originally designated in 1987. This appraisal examines the historic settlement and special character of Somerton, reviews the boundaries of the Conservation Area and suggests areas for consideration.

If adopted, the appraisal will provide a sound basis for development management and encourage development initiatives which endeavour to improve and protect the Conservation Area as well as stimulating local interest and awareness of both problems and opportunities.

Planning policy context

For planning related matters, the land and buildings in the western part of Somerton Conservation Area are within the Broads Authority area, and those within the remainder of the boundary, in Great Yarmouth Borough District, as indicated on the attached map.

There are a range of policies which affect Conservation Areas within both the Broads Authority and Great Yarmouth Borough Council areas, originating from both national and local sources. The latest national documents in respect of historic buildings and Conservation Areas are The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010. The National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012, and Planning Practice Guidance for the NPPF 2014, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Broads Authority and Great Yarmouth Borough Council consider the various provisions contained in them in plan making and decision making.

Locally, in line with government policy, the Broads Authority is currently reviewing and revising local policies which will be published in the Local Plan (formerly the Local Development Framework (LDF)). The Broads Authority has an adopted Core Strategy (2007) and Development Management Policies DPD (2011) and its Sites Specifics DPD was adopted in June 2014. The Broads Authority has some saved Local Plan (2003 and 1997 respectively) Policies in place.

To support these policies, the Broads Authority provides further advice in a series of leaflets, which are currently being reviewed and expanded as part of the Local Plan process. A list of those currently available is attached in Appendix 2.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council has recently adopted a new core strategy in December 2015 and is producing their Sites Specifics DPD.

Preamble

. As land within the Conservation Area is shared between The Broads Authority and Great Yarmouth Borough Council, this appraisal is being carried by the Broads Authority on behalf of both Authorities, and in consultation with Great Yarmouth Borough Council. It considers the whole of the Somerton Conservation Area, divided into the following three character areas;

- West – The Grange and The Staithe

- Central – The Street and White House Farm
- East – Somerton and Burnley Halls

Summary of Special Interest

A group of settlements with individual characters based around the staithe on the River Thurne and the two large estates of Burnley and Somerton Halls. Set in gently rolling fertile agricultural land, adjacent to the lower lying Broads marshes, the Conservation Area contains many mature trees. The use of local materials is a significant feature of the historic buildings in the settlements. The character areas are distinct. Development to the east of the conservation area sits on slightly higher ground towards Winterton and in some ways, is less typical of the character of a Broads village. The settlement to the west has many of the typical features of a Broads Village including a boat dyke, staithe and outlook to open marshes. The settlements clearly have much shared history as well as their own - the redundant Church of St Mary is a reminder of this. The grazing marsh, river, staithe and agriculture clearly shaped the settlements and this tradition continues today with locally harvested reed and sedge still being landed at the staithe for use locally as roofing material and cattle continuing to graze the marshes.

Location and context

Somerton Parish comprises of two distinct settlements, east and west,, situated some 8 miles north of Great Yarmouth, 22 miles north-east of Norwich and just over 1 mile from the coast at Winterton-on-Sea.

General settlement character and plan form

In contrast to the linear pattern of developments on the coast to the east, development in the parish of Somerton is made up of groups of buildings associated with farmsteads, and in the case of the east settlement, large country houses and their estates. This pattern of land ownership is important in how the hamlets have evolved, as is the position of the parish between the Broads marshlands and the coast. They were traditionally agricultural communities based around the two large farming estates of Somerton and Burnley Halls, with the adjacent marshlands used for grazing livestock and the valley sides for general agricultural use. In the west, the proximity of the staithe on the River Thurne was important for trade and communications. Nowadays, the majority of the residents are employed away from the village, and the staithe is mainly used by visitors by boat or by road although some trades and practices continue locally.

Geological background

Many millions of years ago the area now occupied by Norfolk lay beneath the sea. Deposits laid down on the sea bed formed Cretaceous Chalk which underlies the whole of Norfolk. It is the oldest rock type to be found in East Anglia, with an approximate age of 100 million years, and because it was subjected to smoothing glacial action, it provides a much more subdued topography than in other areas of Britain. The chalk deposits were subsequently overlain in Pleistocene times by a series of sand, muds and gravels, and these shelly sand deposits are known as 'Craggs'. They bore the first brunt of the Ice Age as large glaciers moved into East Anglia from the north; the action of the ice moving over the loose deposits contorted the underlying material into complex thrust-type folds, known as 'contorted drift'. During the Ice Ages, rivers carved out wide but shallow valleys, which as they flowed down towards the lower levels, formed large loops or meanders with wide flood plains as can be seen on the River Thurne to the west of Somerton. The River Thurne once flowed out to sea along the line of the Hundred Stream between Horsey and Winterton, and the line of the old river can be seen to the north of Somerton as a wide rush filled depression, with fertile agricultural land on the very slightly higher valley sides.

Historical development

The name Somerton derives from the Old English meaning 'summer enclosure', which suggests the movement of animals between winter and summer pasturage, (Winterton, being the winter pastures). The parish of Somerton has a long history and was well established at the time of the Norman Conquest, its population, land ownership and productive resources being extensively detailed in the

Domesday Book of 1086. This document records that before 1066 the lands were under the jurisdiction of various individuals including Archbishop Stigand, Wymarc and Berard. It would seem at that time some of the lands were of great value, worth pounds rather than shillings.

Archaeology

The Norfolk Historic Environment Service compiles records of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, defensive structures and historic buildings in the county. These records are known as the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER), and an abridged version can be accessed through the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website at www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk.

Early History

Many of the entries on the NHER for Somerton Parish are outside the Conservation Area boundary, but the earliest evidence of human activity in the Parish include archaeological finds such as a flint axe head from the Mesolithic period, a polished flint axe head from the Neolithic period and flint flakes from the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods which are commonly produced during the manufacture of flint tools. Aerial photography has identified ring ditches marking the location of prehistoric mounds or barrows in the areas around Collis Lane, Top Farm and High Barn Farm. The dating of these features is uncertain, although it is thought that they could be from the Bronze Age or even the earlier Neolithic period. The most exciting prehistoric site is at Gibbet Hill where the cropmarks of four ring ditches have been recorded. The location on a prominent, south facing spur of land indicates that this is likely to be a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery, which suggests a reasonable investment of human activity within the landscape during this period, with these different barrow clusters representing important ceremonial or funerary centres.

There is little direct evidence of settlement within Somerton Parish, during the Iron Age, although agriculture clearly took place. Cropmarks of field systems have been recorded at Blood Hills Farm and Top Farm.

The evidence for occupation in the Parish during the Roman period consists of finds of pottery sherds and coins, plus some possible Roman bricks re-used in St Mary's Church. Although no sites from the Saxon period have been identified, artefacts including pottery sherds, a French-style buckle, strap fitting and an early brooch have been found in the Parish.

Medieval period

During the Medieval era there were two churches dedicated to St Mary in Somerton, both within the Conservation Area boundary. Records indicate that the eastern most one was last used in the 17th century, but it is now a ruin with only the roofless nave and tower surviving. The main fabric of Somerton Church dates from the 11th to the 14th century with an impressive round tower constructed during the 14th century. It is still in use and contains a number of important 14th century wall paintings. The church is on rising ground known as Blood Hills which is said to have been the scene of a bloody battle between the Vikings and the Saxons. In the churchyard is the grave of Robert Hales, the Norfolk Giant. He was born in the village in 1820 and one of nine children. Eventually reaching 7 ft and over 32 st, he worked in the circus world, met Queen Victoria and retired to a pub in London. As his health worsened he returned to Norfolk, where he died in 1863.

Another ecclesiastical foundation in Somerton during this period was St Leonard's Leper Hospital, now part of the garden of Hall Farm. Originally established in the late 1180s for the care of 13 lepers, by 1397 The hospital was caring for only four patients, the site was described as 'desolate' and the hospital was dissolved shortly afterwards.

Martham Broad was created by peat cutting/digging in the medieval period, parish records mention a sluice on or nearby. Parish records also indicate a gibbet on Gibbet Hill and the site of a mill at Top Farm. Amongst the artefacts for this period found through metal detecting and field walking across the Parish include coins, buckles and pottery sherds as well as more unusual pieces such as a 14th century seal matrix featuring the pelican of piety and three of its young in their nest, a gold finger ring with a blue stone and a lead Papal bulla of Sextus IV.

Later history

Many of the post-medieval records are concerned with the drainage of lands around Martham Broad. The fertile grazing marshes in the area were formed in the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of draining wet marshes, mainly fen and carr. Earthworks and cropmarks visible from aerial photographs indicate a number of ditches and drainage ditches serving drainage mills and pumping engines to help drain or irrigate the farmland. Nothing survives of the West Somerton Engine, but the brick tower of the West Somerton drainage mill stands a reminder of these activities, and a drainage mill north-east of Leath Farm is recorded on the 19th century Tithe map.

Unusually, there are two post medieval Halls in the Conservation Area at Somerton. Dating from the early 18th century Burnley Hall is a grand red brick building complete with stables, carriage house, icehouse, dovecote and a high boundary wall. Somerton Hall (sometimes referred to as just The Hall), has 16th and 18th century origins, and although much altered in the 19th century, the earlier walled gardens are still discernible and many of the associated farm buildings survive to the west of the Hall. It is clear from this that the halls must have represented elegant and significant estates, but unlike other Norfolk Halls, neither of them has a surviving associated park, although Burnley Hall is set in large grounds which may have been more extensive than they are now. Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk 1883 describes Burnley Hall as 'a mansion surrounded by beautiful gardens, plantations and lawn'.

In the west, Somerton is connected to the River Thurne via Martham Broad; the rivers, dykes and streams were once important arteries for the rural economy of less accessible villages. One of the most important wherry owners in Somerton were the Thain family. The 1881 census records that Dionysius Thain was living at Staithe House with his wife and eight children and was listed as a coal merchant. Three of his sons and their lodger were listed as wherry men. The Thains owned several trading wherries, amongst which was the Lord Roberts which was built at Somerton around 1899, by Ben Benns from Great Yarmouth, a journeyman builder who travelled to wherever he was needed to build boats. The Thain family were the last owners of the Lord Roberts which was in use on the Broads until the late 1960s; descendants still live in the village.

During the 19th century as rail and road transport became viable options for the movement of goods, the wherry trade declined and the lesser waterways in the upper reaches of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads became neglected. Nowadays it is only smaller pleasure craft that can access villages such as Somerton. However, the cottages around the staithe have changed little in the last hundred years as can be seen from early 20th century photographs.

The most recent archaeological sites relate to activity during World War Two, due the position of the village near the coast. The sites of two pill boxes, a searchlight battery and a number of bomb craters have been identified as well as the crash site of a Wellington Bomber south of High Barn Farm.

East and West Somerton were merged to become Somerton in 1935.

Spatial and character analysis

Landscape character

The settlements at Somerton are situated in an area of great landscape and wildlife importance in the Upper Thurne part of the Broads river system. The western part of Somerton is at the head of navigation of the River Thurne, located on slightly raised ground at the edge of a large expanse of Broads marshland which stretches towards Martham Broad, Horsey Mere and the coastal dunes, with higher land to the south.

Deep, well drained coarse loamy soils, associated with the glaciofluvial and drift deposits have formed fertile, gently undulating land, predominately under grazing or arable cultivation. The field pattern in the area is geometric, of medium to large size, with fields defined by intermittent Enclosure hedgerows of variable density and quality. This area appears as more 'managed' than the surrounding landscape with neatly trimmed hedges on many of the minor roads. Locally distinctive features are the dense woodland belts, wooded coverts and former decoy ponds to the north of and associated with the parkland of Burnley Hall, and the thickly wooded area around The Grange in the

west. The road pattern is generally sinuous, with pronounced twists and turns following field boundaries, indicating the earlier land ownership.

West - the Grange and the Staithe

Development in this area is at the lower level towards the area of the former estuary of the River Thurne, and there are views into this part of the Conservation Area from Martham Road (outside the boundary) on the higher ground of the valley sides, across to The Grange woodland, which stands out as a feature within a landscape of largely open arable fields, as well as to the western part of the Conservation Area around the staithe. Sandy Lane slopes down to The Grange and views from here, Cottage Road and the eastern section of Horsey Road are long ranging with remnants of field boundary hedges and trees framing the skyline.

Views to and from the north eastern area around The Grange and around the staithe are across low lying open farmland punctuated by intermittent trees and hedges along the lines of drainage ditches, with the coverts of Burnley Hall visible on the skyline to the west. The settlement boundaries are distinctly contained by minor roads and field boundaries in this area. From certain positions, the Somerton wind turbines to the west and the West Somerton drainage mill to the north are prominent features on the skyline.

The Grange is in the western most part of the Conservation Area. A group of three buildings are shown here on 19th century maps and although the current house dates from the 20th century, some of the outbuildings may be of an earlier date. The house is hidden in a thickly wooded area on an otherwise generally open landscape and is bounded by Sandy Lane, Cottage Road and part of Common Road, the north and north east boundaries abutting grazing marshland. Slightly more visible from Sandy Lane, nearby Heronfield is an early 19th century, Grade II listed house constructed of local red brick with a black glazed pantile roof. The remainder of the development here consists of a number of traditional cottages, dating from at least the 18th and 19th centuries, on the edge of the woodland along Sandy Lane. The colour washed render and thatched roofs of Holly Cottage, West View Cottage and Rectory Cottage all contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. Trees in the wooded area of The Grange are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The overall character of this area is of a group of traditional buildings nestling in the protection of a substantial group of tree planting against the elements of the surrounding open countryside.

At the end of Sandy Lane, to the north west of the Grange, Staithe Farm consists of a farmhouse and large barn, the latter recently converted to a house. Both are constructed of local red brick and red clay pantiles and appear to date from the late 18th or early 19th century. A similar group of buildings is shown on 19th century maps on this site. *It is proposed to extend the Conservation Area boundary here to include the buildings and their immediate environment as part of the historic settlement.* The open nature of the landscape permits long views across the grazing marshes to West Somerton drainage mill.

To the south-west of the Grange at the junction with Cottage Road, Grange Cottage, a single storey building on with, dates from the late 19th century, although much extended earlier this century. It is likely that it was associated with the former Grange. Opposite the junction of Cottage Road with Common Road, the village hall a small pitched roof building clad in green painted corrugated sheeting makes an unusual contribution to the area albeit that it is outside the Conservation Area boundary. The Conservation Area boundary runs along Cottage Road where at the eastern end at the junction with Common Road, East View, an early 20th century brick and rendered house adds to the character of the area.

The Grange section of the Conservation Area is connected to that around the staithe via Common Road and Horsey Road. Development on this section of Common Road is a mixture of 19th and 20th century houses and bungalows, the majority of which do not make any significant special contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Sparrow House to the south of the road is traditionally built of colour washed render with deep-set dormers in a catslide thatched roof. Its scale and form contribute to the character of the area the 20th century replacement windows and front door are not of traditional detail.

On the opposite side of the road, facing open farmland, Stanley Cottage has 19th century origins but has been much extended whilst First Cottage has retained its traditional character being built of colour washed render with a pantile roof. The low sweeping pantile roof and flint and brick boundary wall beside First Cottage are attractive features at the junction of Common Road with Horsey Road.

At the eastern most edge of this part of the Conservation Area, Ivy House faces the corner in a prominent position. A 19th century house of local red brick, there are several thatched, possibly earlier outbuildings in the grounds including an unusual curved roof single storey building on the footpath to the east of the house. All make positive contributions to the Conservation Area. Another barn and single storey outbuildings (all thatched) are in the curtilage of the neighbouring Home Farm House, although little remains of the earlier building which has been substantially altered and extended during the last century.

The majority of the houses on the remainder of the east side of Horsey Road are 20th century, and whilst attractive, mainly behind tall hedges, do not make any significant special historical contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The exception is the last house, Deepwell Cottage, a storey and half cottage of traditional design built gable end to the road of local red brick and pantiles which has been sympathetically extended around a courtyard. The unusual brick and pebble boundary wall makes an attractive addition to the street scene.

The traditional pattern of development is more discernible on the west side of Horsey Road; The Old Post Office Cottage although considerably extended in the 20th century retains its traditional scale and form and uses the local materials of beech pebbles and red brick in the gable facing the road. The neighbouring terrace of three cottages may have 19th century origins. At the entrance to the staithe the low sweeping roof above a flint and brick wall of Tudor Cottage are distinctive features.

The staithe is visually the centrepiece of the Conservation Area. A distinctive Broads village scene with cottages grouped around two sides of a grassed area, opposite the staithe boat dyke. The cottages here are small scale, two storeys of colour washed render with thatch and red or black pantiles. Low timber bollards provide an effective and visually low key means of limiting parking to a small shingled area and this and the timber seats are appropriate for the setting of the staithe. Small boats moored by the timber quay heading, Reeds and rushes on the banks and long open views across marshland northwards to the West Somerton drainage mill are archetypal images of this part of the Broads. Horsey Road winds gently northwards between pollarded willows towards a thickly wooded horizon. This area has a very natural feel, with the only discordant element the electricity wires carried on a line of timber poles to the north-west, although even these have play a part in the local scene as they serve the pumps to drain the marshes.

A footpath on the opposite side of the waterway to the cottages heads along the river bank past the listed West Somerton drainage mill which is outside the Conservation Area.

The existing Conservation Area boundary includes the farmhouse at Staithe House Farm, which sits in a prominent position at the head of the waterway, but excludes the farmyard area behind. Part of Staithe Road is already in the Conservation Area although the buildings here are generally of little historic interest.

West – The Street

The settlement at The Street is some distance from Horsey Road. The narrow lane approach is unusually straight for the area and flanked by neatly cut hedges, which restrict views across the adjacent countryside, although the tower of St Mary's Church, the wind turbines and the wooded areas around Burnley Hall can be seen to the south and east. Once again the boundaries of development are noticeably defined on either side of The Street and the geometric pattern of its pantile roofs can be discerned from Horsey Road on slightly higher ground.

In contrast to development around the staithe, houses and cottages at The Street are generally tightly sited either side of the lane. With no footpaths and a number of the buildings built on the edge of the road The Street has a very self-contained appearance. This characteristic is reinforced as it is not a 'through road' for general traffic and has a quiet and peaceful nature. There is a mixture of building orientation with some gable end to the road, others with their roofs running parallel to it. There has been little 20th century development here and the majority of the houses and cottages date from the

late 18th or early 19th century settlement. The pallet of building materials is more coherent here than at the Staithe area, including local red brick, beech pebbles, colour washed render, pantiles and thatch all of which add to the quality of the Conservation Area. Notable buildings include on the west side, White House Farm, and the barns to the west (now houses), Farriers, Thatched Cottage, The Two on the east side - The Gables, and Starlings Cottages (1 – 4).

East – the Halls area

The eastern part of the Conservation Area is centred on Burnley and Somerton Halls, built on the slightly elevated land above the former river valley floor.

The approach from the west is via Winterton Road which curves gently towards the Halls through open farmland with intermittent hedges, views of the wind turbines on the horizon to the south. The tower of St Mary's church heralds the settlement around the two Halls, but other views into the area are restrained by high walls, trees and extensive woodland.

Church Road flanked by neatly cut hedges, rises up to the church and the buildings around Somerton Hall. St Mary's Church is on the edge of the settlement and approached from Church Road through a 20th century lych-gate. The church, which has been comprehensively repaired in recent years, winning a heritage Angel Award from Historic England (then known as English Heritage) in 2012, is listed, Grade II* and surrounded by a well kept churchyard. Although the buildings of Somerton Hall and the associated farm can be seen from the church approach, the Hall itself has little direct impact on the visual character of the Conservation Area, due to its position away from public roads. However, the site and its surroundings have a long and complex history and is important in the development of village. The location of a Leper Hospital founded in the 12th century (although no remains are now visible) and of a grand house from the 16th century, the existing Hall is thought to contain remnants of this and another in the 18th century, but was considerably altered and extended during the 19th century. Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk 1883 records that 'The Hall' is situated on an eminence, and commands views of the German Ocean both to the north and east, and is the old manor house of Somerton-cum-Butley'. Extensive farm buildings built of local red brick generally pre-date the external envelope of the Hall and provide evidence of its historic status. Built on ground rising up towards the church, there are several garden areas retained by substantial red brick walls, some of them elegantly curved. Hall Farmhouse and Hall Farm Cottages are also of interest, the latter adjacent to the churchyard making a positive visual contribution to the Conservation Area.

The main impact of the Somerton Hall estate from public roads is a surprising one after the surrounding gentle open countryside - a tall red brick wall set back behind a grassed area on the corner of Winterton Road and Dark Lane with a low 19th century gatehouse built in a subdued 'cottage orne' style, nestling below it in an almost subservient fashion. The roofs of the Hall can only just be seen over the wall through trees within the grounds. This is a prominent 'set piece' in this part of the Conservation Area.

At the corner of the wall to Somerton Hall, Winterton Road divides with Dark Lane running south beneath large trees between the two Halls to continue on out of the Conservation Area towards Winterton-on-Sea and Back Road east behind Burnley Hall. The entrance to Burnley Hall here is very much lower key than that to Somerton Hall. A white picket gateway leads from Winterton Road to the drive to Burnley Hall which is hidden behind mature trees. This and West Lodge, a 19th century thatched red brick 'gatehouse' beside the gateway are the only hints of the grand house behind. A similar house, East Lodge, is at the opposite end of the drive on Manor Farm Road.

Although Back Road is a public road, there is a definite sense of being in a private part of the estate. Another impressive red brick wall shields Burnley Hall from sight, allowing only intermittent views of the back of the house, outbuildings and the working farmyard area. The principle facades of Burnley Hall face west and south overlooking a low key landscape of rolling lawns shielded from public view by hedges and mature trees. However from Back Road, the tall chimneys and complex roofs of the rear of the hall together with high brick walls and lower flint and brick walls and the historic farm buildings, do more than hint at the status of the estate. Constructed in the early 18th century the house was built with what were all the modern conveniences of the time – walled gardens, stables, carriage house, an icehouse and dovecote all partially enclosed by a high boundary wall.

Back Lane curves gently past open farmland to the north with wooded covert areas noticeable on the skyline, and then between trees, with the ruins of St Mary's Church to the south almost hidden in dense woodland. This is a very dramatic place – the tower and tall flint walls of the roofless nave of the former church clothed in ivy and window-less arches providing views through the woodland to the sky beyond.

The existing Conservation Area boundary runs along the edge of the wooded area around Burnley Hall including the East Lodge previously mentioned. To the east, Manor Farm is a group of buildings constructed in the 19th century and earlier comprising of a farmhouse, barns and farm buildings, all now sympathetically converted to residential.

It is proposed to extend the boundary of the Conservation Area to include the buildings at Manor Farm as being part of the historic development of the village.

Architectural styles and materials.

Six buildings within the Conservation Area boundary are included in the Secretary of State's List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These are listed in Appendix 1. There are also a number of buildings which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and these are noted in Appendices 3 and 4.

Although there is no prevalent architectural style, as would be found for example in planned suburban areas, there are unifying factors of the scale of the buildings and the use of materials. Aside from the two Halls, the traditional buildings are generally of a small domestic scale, two storeys with steeply pitched roofs although one and half storeys, where the upper floor is lit by dormers set into the roof are also found. Some buildings have low sweeping roofs such as that at Tudor Cottage. Colour washed render and red brick are most the commonly used wall materials with, for roofs, red or black pantiles, but there are still a pleasing number of buildings traditionally thatched in reed, often with sedge ridges. All of these materials would historically have been readily available in the local area, and some still are; render, bricks and pantiles using local clay, reed and sedge from the marshes and pebbles (rather than knapped field flints) from the nearby coastal fringes. Later buildings have not always used this more traditional palette as more non local materials became more freely available from the late C19.

Ground surface materials and the public realm.

It is notable that there are neither formal pavements beside the roads nor any street lighting in the villages, the lack of which emphasises the informal rural character of the area. Many of the buildings are constructed on the edge of the road and where this is not the case, the roads are fringed with only narrow grass verges. Any proposals to diminish this character by introducing lighting, kerbs, footpaths and modern materials should be carefully considered. Public road finishes are generally tarmacadam, the parking area at the staithe is hoggin and this informal material reinforces the rural character of the area as do the low timber posts and timber seats. In the main, the forecourts to buildings are sympathetic to the character of the location, bound gravel or shingle being the most commonly used finish, which is in keeping with the rural location.

Trees, hedges and boundary treatments.

There are significant areas of mature trees in the Conservation Area, notably around The Grange and Burnley Hall and in the grounds of Somerton Hall, the majority of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Much of the surrounding countryside is open fields, but hedges are an important feature in the approaches to the Conservation Area, for example on The Street and Church Road. Within the Conservation Area, gardens are bounded by hedges or low brick or brick and flint walls, which are a feature of the area. These are considered as positive contributor to character reinforcing the rural character of the streetscape, where some more modern materials may not.

Issues, pressure and opportunities for improvements.

Generally the buildings and gardens in the Conservation Area are well maintained and there do not appear to be any structures that would qualify to be on the Buildings at Risk Register.

However, the special character of Conservation Areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor, and well intentioned, home improvements such as the insertion of replacement windows and doors with ones of an inappropriate design or material, (for example hinged opening lights in lieu of sash windows and UPVC instead of painted timber). This can be a particular issue with unlisted buildings that positively contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. In line with current legislation, all complete window replacements are required to achieve minimum insulation values, but recognising the affect that inappropriate replacements can have, Local Authorities can relax that requirement when considering the restoration or conversion of certain buildings within Conservation Areas, and when considering replacement advice should be sought from the Local Authority at an early stage.

Other pressures on the character of the Conservation Area are the unsympathetic addition of extensions, stand-alone structures such as garages and the over development of the sites on which the original buildings stand. Proposals for extending or altering existing properties should be carried out with due regard to the effect on the character of the area.

The village is a popular place and pressure for new development is inevitable. Approval was given some years ago for redevelopment at Staithe House Farm beside the river, but that has not yet come to fruition. Further new residential development could be acceptable in the Conservation Area if achievable without upsetting the delicate balance of its character and if appropriate in policy terms. The approaches to the village are so important that development outside the village envelope should be resisted.

Recommendations for suggested improvements.

The settlements are well maintained and no obvious areas for improvement were identified at the time of the survey. The informal character of a rural area can easily be eroded by the introduction of more urban elements. **The Conservation Area boundary and suggested amendments.**

The boundaries to the Conservation Area are as illustrated on the accompanying map. It is suggested that the following amendments to the Conservation Area boundary could be considered;

West (Broads Authority Executive area)		
Staithe Farm, Sandy Lane	Extension of boundary to include Staithe Farmhouse and Staithe Farm Barn	To include this part of the historic settlement
East (GYBC)		
Manor Farm Road	Extension of boundary to include Manor Farmhouse and barns	To include this part of the historic settlement

Public consultation.

Consultation with interested parties and organisations was carried out in accordance with the Broads Authority 'Statement of Community Involvement'. A joint consultation exercise was undertaken with Great Yarmouth Borough Council as the proposed Conservation Area boundaries include land in both planning authority areas as defined on the maps included in the character appraisal. A letter and leaflet were delivered to all residents living within the Conservation Area boundary, and copies of the appraisal documents were made available both online and in hard copy format in the Broads Authority offices and through the Parish Council. The leaflet included a comments section and consultees were also able to comment by letter or Email. The consultation included an open morning in the village, where consultees could comment directly to Officers.

Appendix 1

Listed structures in the Conservation Area (grade II unless otherwise indicated)

Heronfield, Sandy Lane,

Church of St Mary (II*)

Ruins of the Church of St Mary

Burnley Hall (II*)

Stables at Burnley Hall

Garden Walls at Burnley Hall including Icehouse

Appendix 2

Broads Authority Guidance leaflets

- Keeping the Broads Special
- Do I need Planning Permission?
- How do I apply for Planning Permission?
- Building at the Waterside – A guide to design of waterside buildings in the Broads Authority area
- Environment and Landscape – How do I plan and manage trees and scrub alongside rivers?
- Development and Flood Risk in the Broads
- Riverbank Protection Works – A guide for riparian landowners
- Sustainability Guide – Sustainable development in the Broads

Appendix 3

Unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area (within the Broads Authority Executive Area)

Whilst the following buildings, boundary walls and structures within the present Conservation Area and the proposed extensions to it do not merit full statutory protection, they are considered to be of local architectural or historic interest, and every effort should be made to maintain their contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

West (BA Exec)

Sandy Lane

Holly Cottage

West View Cottage

Rectory Cottage, former barn and curved boundary wall

Staithe Farmhouse

Staithe Farm Barn

Cottage Road

Grange Cottage

Common Road

East View

Sparrow House

First Cottage

Horsey Road

Ivy House and outbuildings

Barn and outbuildings to Home Farm House

Deepwell Cottage and outbuildings

Tudor Cottage

The Staithe

Rivers End

Staithe Cottage

Free Staithe Cottage

Staithe House Farmhouse

Wherries End

Appendix 4

Buildings that contribute to the character of the Conservation Area (GYBC)

West

The Street (west side)

White House Farm, outbuildings and garden wall

Former barns and outbuildings to the west of White House Farm

Farriers

Thatched Cottage

The Two Cottages

East Side

The Gables,

Starlings Cottages (1 – 4) and outbuildings

East

West Lodge

East Lodge

Manor Farmhouse

Former barns and outbuildings to the west, north and east of Manor Farmhouse

Somerton Hall

The Lodge

Barns and outbuildings at Somerton Hall

Garden and boundary walls at Somerton Hall

Hall Farmhouse

Hall Farm Cottages

Appendix 5

Contact details and further information

The Broads Authority
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Tel: 01603 610734
Website: www.broads-authority.gov.uk

Great Yarmouth Borough Council
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Hall Plain
Great Yarmouth
NR30 2QF
Tel: 01493 856100
Website: www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk

Norfolk Historic Environment Service
Union House
Gressenhall
Dereham
Norfolk NR20 4DR
Tel: 01362 869280
Website: www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

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