

# Heritage Asset Review Group

## Notes of the meeting held on 25 June 2021

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### Present

Chair (for this meeting) - Harry Blathwayt, Bill Dickson, Tim Jickells and Bruce Keith

### In attendance

Kayleigh Judson – Heritage Planning Officer, Kate Knights – Historic Environment Manager,  
Cally Smith – Head of Planning and Sara Utting - Governance Officer

## 1. Apologies and welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies** were received from Stephen Bolt and Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro.

## 2. Declarations of interest and introductions

No further declarations of interest were made in addition to those already registered.

## 3. Notes of HARG meeting held on 12 March 2021

The notes of the meeting held on 12 March 2021 were received. These had been submitted to the Planning Committee on 23 April 2021.

### Minute 6 – any other business – Heritage Alliance

The Historic Environment Managed advised that the Heritage Alliance only comprised organisations representing independent heritage bodies and charities and, therefore, as a government organisation, the Broads Authority was ineligible to join.

## 4. Historic Environment Team progress report

The Historic Environment Management (HEM) and the Heritage Planning Officer (HPO) presented the report providing an update on progress with key items of work by the Historic Environment Team between March to June 2021.

### Conservation Area review

The HEM advised that public consultation had commenced for the Belaugh CA review, with all those affected having received a leaflet and in addition, those who would be affected by the Local Listing or Article 4 Direction had received more detailed information. To date, only a few responses had been received. The Parish Meeting, scheduled for yesterday evening, had been cancelled due to the Covid restrictions and so the consultation period had been extended by one month and staff were hoping to be able to present the results at the rescheduled meeting.

The review of Halvergate and Tunstall CA was moving forward.

The Authority had been consulted by East Suffolk Council on the reappraisal of the Bungay Conservation Area, given that part of the CA was within the BA area, prior to the formal public consultation commencing. Generally, officers were very happy with the document.

In terms of Horning, due to the ongoing Covid restrictions, officers felt that it would be beneficial to postpone this review until 2023-24 as the documents had been prepared over a year ago and postponing would allow for more up to date documents to be prepared prior to a thorough re-appraisal. The Parish Council was particularly keen to hold a public consultation event. In response to a question on the impact of the Government White Paper, particularly in terms of timetabling this work, the HEM confirmed that this would not affect Horning as it already had a Conservation Area designation, which was useful for property/landowners, developments and planning officers to be aware of. It was the re-appraisal work which officers were due to undertake. It was hoped to extend the CA with Crabbetts Marsh and the settlement east of the church to provide additional protection but the majority of the village was already covered by the CA designation. A member questioned if the waterworks would be protected under the reappraisal and the HEM responded that whilst they were not covered

under the current designation, they would be included in the proposed extension of the area. The member added that the parish council had concerns about the staithe land between the waterworks and the former waterworks manager's house and questioned if this could also be included or whether, as marshland, it was not relevant. The HEM advised that it was not usual practice to include open land but on this occasion, the situation with the staithe could mean it could have a slightly different status as it related to a settlement to some extent. It was agreed the HEM would liaise with the member direct, outside of this meeting, to discuss in further detail.

The loss of thatched roof coverings in the Authority's area was becoming increasingly apparent and members noted that unless a building was listed, planning permission was not needed to remove thatch to change to an alternative material. Thatch was a significant vernacular material in the Broads area, and not just for the larger houses but also incidental buildings such as chalets and boathouses. Article 4 Directions could be applied, such as the case in the review of Belaugh Conservation Area, to restrict Permitted Development Rights for the removal of thatch. It was noted that cost, availability of product and availability of thatchers were all factors which contributed to a reduction in the use of thatch. If reed had to be imported from Europe then this made it a far less sustainable material. A member referred to a property in the New Forest which had used imported reed from Norfolk as the owner could not source locally to them and if this raised a potential issue with control of supply. Regarding the short supply of thatchers, he suggested that contact should be made with the colleges to encourage take-up by students. Another member added that he felt the Authority should encourage the growth of thatching material, highlighting the ecological benefits of growing reed, and also thatching as a sustainable trade. He supported the use of measures such as Article 4 Directions to retain thatch in the area. The Head of Planning referred to paludiculture – the practice of crop production on wet soils, predominantly peatlands and how the new initiative "Farming in Protected Landscapes" (FiPL) provided opportunities to encourage landowners. A number of years ago the Heritage Lottery Fund funded a scheme for training millwrights and reed-cutters as there was concern at the loss of these skilled tradesmen. She was aware that there was a waiting list for people requiring the services of a thatcher. In light of the above comments, it was suggested that this was a major issue affecting large swathes of the Broads and which justified discussion at a Planning Committee meeting for example, to highlight public attention. The HEM advised that she had been in discussions with Andrea Kelly, Head of Ecology, and they had been liaising with the various thatching bodies. Unfortunately, planning had very little control over the removal of thatch on a high proportion of the buildings which were currently thatched. The Head of Planning added that as a review of the Local Plan was underway, with topics being presented to Planning Committee every month over the next year, this could provide an opportunity to members to discuss formally. The overall format of how the review would be based was yet to be decided but there could be a particular topic/theme on the use of sustainable materials and the relationship with the Broads, supporting the use of traditional materials.

## Listed Buildings

It was noted that, due to the Covid restrictions, work on the Quinquennial survey had to be stopped and, consequently, the Buildings at Risk Register had not been properly reviewed since 2019. However, it was anticipated work would recommence shortly. Other buildings would be added to the list as work with the survey progressed and it was anticipated the majority of these would be mills.

## Water Mills and Marshes - update

The HEM reported that she had had several meetings with the team at City College. It was disappointing that students had missed so much time of hands-on tutorials over the last year and so the priority was for them to catch up with missed learning and the necessary assessments before the end of term in July. Regrettably, the examining boards had not given any additional leniency to the students in terms of timescales and so they were under a great deal of pressure, which meant that the Heritage Skills element of the courses was not a priority. No students had been able to work on site in recent months but it was hoped this situation would shortly improve. Opportunities were now being advertised for the summer with the Authority and a carpentry student had been working on site. It was hoped that, by September, more students would be back out on site and the normal situation would resume.

A member referred to FiPL, with mills qualifying for assistance, and the benefits of referring farmers who were in ownership of mills of the available resources.

The HEM was pleased to report that the team had recently received two awards - Six Mile House had won the best in the conservation category and came second in the overall category.

Photographs were shown of Highs Mill which was undergoing repairs to the joinery and brick raceway and it was hoped this work would be completed by the Autumn, following which the team would move onto Muttons Mill. A video was shown which had recently been produced by the Windmills Trust, providing aerial footage of the mill. Here the sails had been removed six weeks ago and this had identified them as being in very good condition and so students would be carrying out minor repairs and redecoration. Other parts of the mill were in a poor state, such as the raceway and arch beneath the mill, cap and petticoat and only minor repairs were needed to internal floors and beams. Fortunately, the windows and doors were in a good condition. As the mill was surrounded by marshland, access continued to be an issue. Due to the costs of the works for underpinning the mill, officers had to go out to tender. However, only one response was received and the costs quoted were much more than anticipated and exceeded the budget for the whole project. Therefore, a second opinion had been obtained as to what works were required to stabilise the mill and a local structural engineer had advised that currently no underpinning or piling works were actually needed and the mill could be stabilised in another way. At the rate of the mill's movement, it would be a long time before its stability became critical.

The HEM reported that no tenders had been received for millwrighting services connected to the project which was very disappointing. However, a local millwright had been appointed on

a consultancy basis to advise on the elements of the works relating to mill machinery and to work with students on occasions.

It had become apparent that the original plan for the Land of the Windmills project, to repair 12 mills in five years, was over ambitious, both in terms of time and costs and this had been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. Discussions had taken place with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and they had been very understanding and were happy with the way the project was proceeding. Management Team had also been kept informed and they were also supportive of the progress made despite the challenges faced.

### **Enforcement update**

The Heritage Planning Officer reported that Oby Manor had now been purchased and the new owners were keen to prioritise the replacement of the windows.

In terms of Martham Mill, which had been reported at the previous meeting, a Listed Building application had been submitted, retrospectively, and this had received support from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Works had been allowed to continue during this time as the cap was in a precarious condition and should be completed by mid-July. The application was likely to be approved under delegated powers.

### **Matters for information – St Peter’s House, Beccles**

The HPO advised that an application had been determined under delegated powers for a number of repairs to St Peter’s House in Beccles, which was considered to be of interest to the group. She provided a detailed presentation, including photographs of the exterior and interior of the property.

The property, a Grade I Listed Building, was two and half storeys with a red brick main façade facing the street and a contrasting stucco rendered façade facing the river. It was on the site of the former St Peter’s Church, thought to be completely demolished in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century with some of the materials re-used. However, it had since been discovered that there were more remains than originally thought and parts of the flint walls had been reused in the house. The roof was covered with black glazed pantiles on the street elevation and predominantly red to the rear. There were elements from the Georgian period and Gothic revival featuring “Strawberry Hill” design. The site was located amongst other listed buildings and was therefore in a sensitive location.

The works were all aimed at the eradication of water ingress and included: the repair of historic timbers in the roof structure; the relining of the roof with a breathable membrane and replacement of the roof tiles (with existing and reclaimed); the realignment of the existing valley gutters and repairs to the lead lining; replacement upvc guttering and downpipes with cast iron; patch repairs to the external render and brickwork. The proposals also included the installation of a rooflight on an enclosed roof valley (possibly a reinstatement) and the replacement of the black roof tiles with red (as would have been on the original building).

The wider proposal sought to repair an existing roof structure and guttering which had become defective. The property had been extended over time and an overall strategy for the

shedding of rainwater had not been considered but thought about in a piecemeal fashion. As a result, the natural deterioration of the roof and defective guttering were causing damp issues within the property which was damaging historic fabric below. The principle of fixing the roof, altering the gutter to ensure a more effective method of water shedding and patch repairing render and brickwork, was therefore welcomed and the application had been recommended for approval. A monitoring visit was planned to see the rafters in situ to check on progress.

## 5. Any other business

### St Benets

A member commented that on a recent visit to St Benets Abbey, he was concerned at the degradation which had been caused by visitors to the site through either climbing on the walls or removing stones from the walls and piling them near the cross, as a cairn. He was disturbed by the effect this was having and considered it should be discussed at a future meeting of this group to investigate further. The cross was potentially an unsafe structure due to subsidence caused by water but acknowledged it might be controversial to suggest its removal, having been donated by HM The Queen who had commissioned its manufacture. At the time of its placement when the cross wall had been erected, it had been blessed by the Abbott and become part of the history of St Benets Abbey and therefore worthy of retention as it had become part of the history of the Abbey. The Archaeological Trust were probably more interested in what lay beneath the ground and not necessarily what had been erected in the 1970's which meant the importance of the edifice was not being recognised. The HEM advised that she needed to speak to the Norfolk Archaeological Trust as there had been a change in personnel and suggested that she could raise this issue then, possibly on site, and report back to HARG. The member added that the Lord Bishop of Norwich still visited the site as it was consecrated ground and should be included in the discussions. He also queried whether the use of the adjoining land for grazing was adding to the degradation and the HEM responded that both she and the Head of Planning had met with the former head of the Trust last January/February when the issue of the cattle had been raised but these were permitted by the lease and therefore they could not secure their removal.

### Bruce Keith

The Chair reported that this was Bruce's last meeting with the Authority and praised him for his service, particularly his common-sense which was often a rare commodity. He would be sad to lose Bruce but thanked him for all his services and wished him the very best for the future. Bruce responded that he had enjoyed the range and diversity of topics discussed at HARG meetings which he found fascinating and also the interesting people and commended the staff for their commitment.

## 6. Date of next meeting

The next HARG meeting would be held on **Friday 17 September 2021**.

The meeting ended at 11.02am

Signed by

Chairman