

# BURNHAM THORPE

## CONSERVATION AREA DRAFT CHARACTER STATEMENT



*BURNHAM THORPE, a considerable village and parish, pleasantly seated in the vale of a small rivulet, will ever be memorable in the annals of fame, for having been the birth-place of that eminently distinguished, and ever-to-be-lamented hero, Admiral Lord Nelson, whose father was for many years rector of this parish.*

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

**DESIGNATED: March 1977**  
**REVISED: February 1992**



**POLICY &  
ENVIRONMENT**

## INTRODUCTION

***A Conservation Area - "An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".***

The conservation of the historic environment is part of our quality of life, helping to foster economic prosperity and providing an attractive environment in which to live or work. The Borough Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of West Norfolk's historic built environment and significant parts of it are designated as conservation areas.

Conservation areas were introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local Authorities were required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest, whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as conservation areas. This duty is now part of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act which also requires the review of existing conservation areas and, where appropriate, the designation of new ones. The quality and interest of a conservation area depends upon a combination of factors including the relationship and architectural quality of buildings, materials, spaces, trees and other landscape features, together with views into and out of the area.

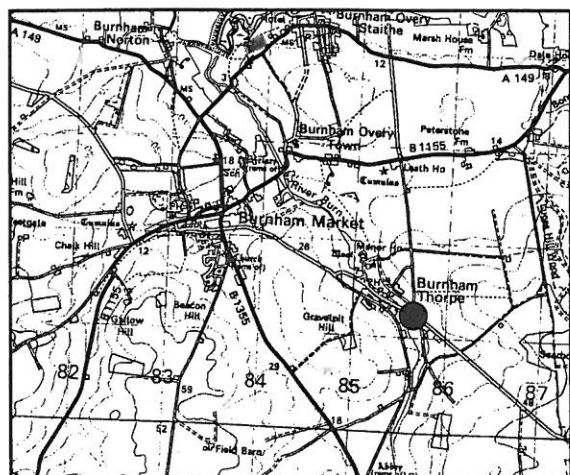
**The Burnham Thorpe Conservation Area was first designated in 1977. This document highlights the special qualities that underpin the character of the conservation area, justifying its designation.** It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes to the environment occur, they do so in a sympathetic way without harm to the essential character of the area. This type of assessment has been encouraged by recent Government Advice (PPG15) and it will eventually form supplementary planning guidance to those policies in the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan aimed at protecting the overall character of conservation areas. In particular, the guidance will supplement the Local Plan

policies which deal with demolition and new development within the conservation area and new development on land adjoining the conservation area which might affect its setting or the views in or out of the area.

This character statement does not address enhancement proposals. Community led enhancement schemes will be considered as part of a separate process.

## SETTING AND LOCATION

Burnham Thorpe is situated in the shallow valley of the river Burn 4 kilometres (2½ miles) downstream from North Creake and a further 4 kilometres (2½ miles) inland from where the river becomes tidal at Burnham Overy Staithe. The village lies within the North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 9 kilometres (5 miles) west of Wells-next-the-Sea, 20 kilometres (12½ miles) east of Hunstanton and 15 kilometres (9 miles) north of Fakenham. The parish of Burnham Thorpe abuts Holkham to the east sharing a common boundary that runs due north along the course of the old Roman road.



The Conservation Area, which takes in the whole village, is in the form of a loose knit settlement scattered along a network of country lanes from Manor House at its northern end to The Parsonage over 1 kilometre (2/3 mile) south at the other. From the ribbon of water meadows that snakes through the valley bottom the bare chalky hills rise on either side to a height of 45

metres (147 feet), broken only by the occasional plantation - Hillock Wood on Gravel Pit Hill to the south west and a thin pine shelterbelt to the east and Open Meadow Plantation to the south.

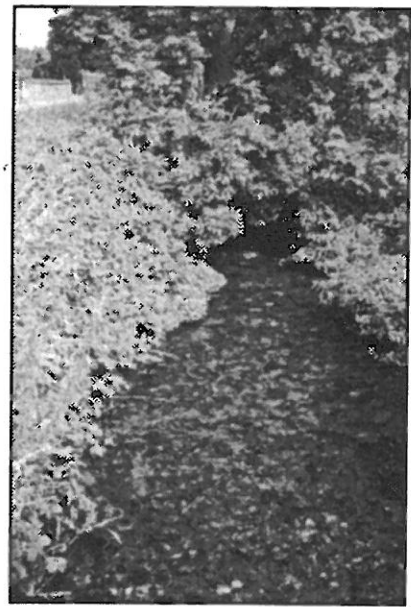
The main approach road from Burnham Market slips down into the valley with Manor House visible across the fields. To the right the pinnacled tower of All Saints church rises gently above the trees and beyond, the long wooded flank of Holkham Park dominates the skyline. From the opposite direction Walsingham Road runs along the southern perimeter belt of the park before descending through open, rolling fields into the Burn valley with the orange pantile roofline of Whitehall Farm directly ahead on the south eastern edge of the village. Just out of North Creake the road to Burnham Thorpe leaves the B1355 and runs along the edge of the meadows, with an isolated field barn visible along a track to the right. Ahead, the wooded grounds of The Parsonage on rising ground mark quite emphatically the southern edge of the Conservation Area with views across the meadows to Whitehall Farm and its grain silo against a dark backdrop of conifers.



## **ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

At Shereford, just west of Fakenham, the old Roman road crosses the river Wensum on its way north to the earthworks in the marshes at Holkham that mark the site of a small military outpost. Much of the line of the road is still clearly identifiable on the high ground running parallel with and to the east of the Burn valley. During the Saxon colonisation this well defined line was adopted as the boundary between parishes including the stretch between Holkham and Burnham Thorpe that runs as a bridleway along the western edge of the park.

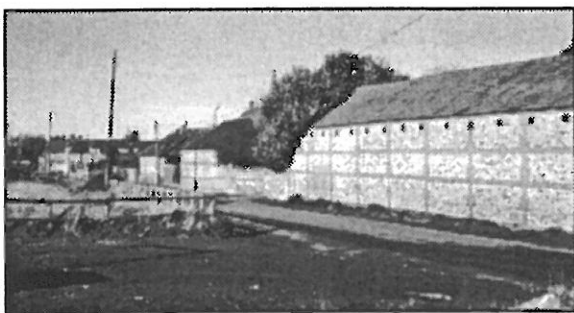
Throughout the Roman occupation the Burn was navigable by small craft several miles inland. There is sufficient archaeological evidence from the river meadows - small coin hordes, pottery sherds and metalwork - near the church upstream to the North Creake boundary, to suggest a well established scatter of Romano-British farmsteads along the valley.



The first Saxon invaders made their way inland up this same valley establishing an early foothold at Burnham or "Bruneham" meaning a settlement by a stream. The location of the first settlement is unclear but was probably at Burnham Ulph, now part of Burnham Market. As the original Saxon manor grew it became sub-divided and took in additional land creating secondary hamlets such as Burnham's Norton, Sutton and Westgate. Burnham Thorpe is first mentioned in 1199; Thorpe being a Scandinavian place name referring to an outlying farmstead belonging to a manor and evidence of further secondary growth away from the original nucleus. The oldest part of All Saints church is early 13th Century and would support the early medieval growth of the village. But the construction of All Saints represents a shift towards the river, replacing an earlier structure, St Peter's, which was situated to the west on higher ground near the Burnham Market road.

The present Manor House is probably 17th Century in origin but almost certainly stands on an earlier manorial site of which the moat and manorial fishponds identified by crop marks to the north are all that survive. Low earthworks in the meadow to the east, bounded by a hollow way, together with medieval finds south of the church, suggest the manor and church were the twin focal points of a small nucleated medieval community. Walter de Brunham became the first Norman lord of the manor but in the year after Magna Carta the manor passed to the Calthorpe family during which time Burnham Thorpe prospered from river trade. The church was then enlarged, notably its decorated chancel with chequered flushwork gable paid for by Sir William Calthorpe (d.1420) whose fine military brass lies before the altar.

There is archaeological evidence of a second medieval settlement beside the Burn approximately 1½ kilometres (1 mile) upstream in the meadow opposite The Parsonage. Here the finds span a much longer period from Roman to medieval. Low earthworks and cropmarks of enclosures suggest the site of a deserted medieval village, but why was it abandoned? The gradual silting up of the river and the movement of trade downstream to Overy Staithe was a major factor, combined with visitations of the plague throughout the medieval period (the monastic community just upstream at North Creake was wiped out in 1504) and the conversion of good arable land to sheep pasture.



From the 17th Century the village began to assume the form and character that it displays today with a loose network of farmsteads (not unlike the pattern of

Romano-British units). Three of the farms with 17th Century origins - Ivy Farm, East End Farm and Whitehall Farm - are strung out along the Walsingham Road. This diagonal spine through the village was an important medieval route between Burnham Market and the Priory at Walsingham. At the northern end stood Manor House, the oldest and most important centre, and at the other end of this scattered village stood the L-shaped rectory where Nelson was born in 1758. The decision to build the rectory so far from the church may well have been influenced by the position of the Manor House. This rivalry continued when in 1802 the old rectory near the road was replaced by a new, neo-classical design set apart in its own landscaped grounds. This was in response to a Georgian refronting of the Manor House a few years earlier.

At this time the manor was in the hands of Lord Walpole and together with the agricultural experiments at Holkham, this part of Norfolk became a prosperous and progressive farming area. Most of the population of Burnham Thorpe was employed on one of the nearby farms and housed in the 19th Century cottages strung out along Walsingham Road and part of Creake Road. Between them the Lord Nelson P.H., the School House, the Methodist Chapel (1864), the Nelson



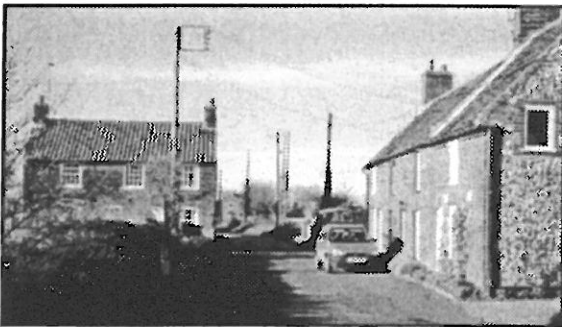
Memorial Hall (1891) and the few general stores catered for the needs of the rural workforce. This pattern remains today very much as it was 100 years ago. Although the Chapel and shops have closed, the farms still operate but with a considerably reduced payroll and many of the cottages are now weekend or retirement homes. Apart from the two small groups of council houses and

a few infill houses in Creake Road, there has been virtually no new development in the village.

### CHARACTER OVERVIEW

Burnham Thorpe is a quiet rural village arranged around a network of country lanes and disturbed only by the summer tourists who come to see the site of Nelson's birthplace and the Nelson memorabilia in the pub and in the church. The Conservation Area is bounded by minor roads and tracks, notably Back Lane and Creake Road, that also mark the boundary between the narrow ribbon of meadowland running the length of the designated area, and the arable fields that slope gently uphill on either side.

All these elements - the wide, shallow valley, the open areas of meadow that separate the groups of buildings and the large fields beyond - combine to create a sense of spaciousness throughout the village.



At the northern end the Manor House and church form an isolated group surrounded by meadows and mature trees while at the



opposite end The Parsonage performs the same function, marking another entrance to the village. Less dramatically but just as effectively Whitehall Farm, Ivy Farm and their impressive threshing barns, are situated at either end of the Walsingham Road approaches. Between the two are threaded the main groups of cottages - on the north side of the road from The Lodge to the Methodist Chapel and then on the south side along the Burn, spilling over into Creake Road. These groups of minor vernacular buildings are knit together not just by their proximity, domestic scale and details but by the use of the same restricted range of local materials - orange pantiles, chalk and less frequently flint, with red brick dressings.

### SPACES AND BUILDINGS

In Burnham Norton there is no clear centre to the village, but in the absence of any obvious focal point the Church/Manor House group at the northern end is historically the place from which to begin an assessment of the Conservation Area.

Surrounded by its moat and the meadows between it and the river Burn, the Georgian front to Manor House conceals any evidence of an earlier building. Just to the south east, beyond a group of single storey farm buildings stands All Saints church on



slightly higher ground, the track between the two lined by sycamores with more mature trees along the north side of the churchyard. The best view of the church is

however on the far (east) side where the chequerwork end of the chancel is impressive. Further south towards the Memorial Hall, its low ridge line broken by a tall slim cupola, the views south west across the playing fields are towards the Lord Nelson P.H., its colour-washed facade clearly visible, and the skyline beyond broken by the rounded profile of Hillock Wood.

Travelling south from Manor House along the track beside the Burn, flanked by a narrow deciduous belt the open triangular grass area is bounded on the other side by an incongruous line of tall, dark leylandii. The view ahead is more rewarding - the full extent of Ivy Farm's clunch and pantile barn is impressive with decorative brickwork to the gable ends. Set back from the road it marks the beginning of the second most important group of historic buildings in the



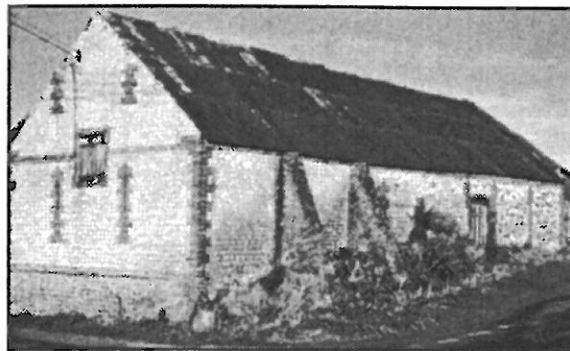
village. Low flint boundary walls and the gable end of Ivy Farmhouse define this stretch of Walsingham Road which opens out opposite with views across the playing field. The Lord Nelson, plain 18<sup>th</sup> Century is set back and then the Old School House, coursed cobble gable end to the road, completes the sequence, a steeply pitched 17<sup>th</sup> Century building with 3 storey flint porch a bold, eye-catching centrepiece. More alien leylandii hide the pumping



station opposite.

Further along Walsingham Road the traditional buildings settle down into a mixture of clunch and red brick cottages that extend through to Creak Road, via Blacksmith's Lane. The grouping is looseknit but hard up against the road alongside the Burn with the council houses at The Pightle visible across a rough meadow. The view ahead is terminated by the distinctive gabled facade of a small Methodist chapel as the road crosses the river. Beyond are more cottages lining the road but now on the north side, clearly visible from Creak Road across the meadows. The mixture is much as before but with more red brick facades although the 3 tier effect of flint, chalk block and red brick upper storey on one terrace suggests partial rebuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

This cluster of former labourers' cottages, many still with their wooden sash and casement windows, gives way to taller farm buildings, their clunch walls divided into blank panels by courses of yellow brick flanking the entrance to East End farmhouse (17<sup>th</sup> Century) set back from the road. The sundial dated 1729 probably refers to the early Georgian alterations.



More outbuildings define the curve of Back Lane, terminated by a truncated clunch barn re-roofed in corrugated tin at the road junction. Beyond is another group of 19<sup>th</sup> Century cottages, some again by the roadside, others set back behind flint walls with outbuildings and lean-to extensions that together create an attractive and varied series of enclosed spaces. This is in contrast to the long high garden wall opposite and the rather austere rear end of The Lodge that looms above it. Visible from

the lane to the south this late 19th Century residence with its gault brick facade and unusual half-hipped, slate clad mansard roof looks out across sloping lawns and the water meadows of the Burn to The Parsonage opposite.

From along this lane running between the Walsingham and Creake Roads are some of the most attractive and expansive views in the Conservation Area. North West along the length of the meadows, framed on one side by a curving line of willows alongside the Burn, the view takes in the whole orange pantile roofscape along Walsingham Road. Across the meadows to the west Hillock Wood stands alone on top of the slope before the view picks up the perimeter line of beech trees climbing uphill along the northern edge of The Parsonage. Further along its white chimney stacks appear above the trees but in the foreground by the roadside, is a more prominent group of ancillary buildings, include a late 19th Century lodge to the big house and small cobble threshing barn with honeycomb brick panels, as yet uncovered. Together with several other cottages, linked by low garden walls and tall, overhanging trees, this is a most attractive prelude to the main body of the village with the Burn, no more than a stream flowing alongside the road. Further north along Creake Road with bare arable



fields on one side, The Shooting Box forms the centrepiece of another small, isolated group surrounded by meadows. A long, plain brick fronted house, 18th Century with regular rows of sashes and a later parallel range to the rear, it stands back behind a

low flint wall, coped and curving up to ball finial gate piers at either end.

## LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 8 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985 and there have been no further additions since then.

### Listed Grade I

- **Church of All Saints:** Early 13th Century arcades, 14th Century aisles, 15th Century clerestory, north porch and chancel. Rubble walls with chéquered flintwork east end. Tower rebuilt 1842. Full length military brass of Sir William Calthorpe, 1420 and Nelson monuments.

### Listed Grade II

- **Manor House:** 17th Century evidence in flint west gable. 18th Century front pile with sashes and columned porch. 19th Century rear pile. Hipped roof.
- **Parsonage House, Creake Road:** 1802. Rendered front, clunch and



brick gables. Hipped slate roof. 5 bays with outer bow windows and central porch on square piers.

- **Whitehall Farmhouse, Walsingham Road:** Mid 17th Century with 18th



Century brick front. Flint and chalk rear. Colourwashed. 19th Century casements.

- **East End Farmhouse, Walsingham Road:** 17th Century with 18th Century alterations. Squared clunch; orange pantiles. Sashes. Sundial with datestone W.G.1729. Coped parapet gables.
- **School House, The Street:** Early 17th Century. Coursed clunch and knapped flint. Orange pantiles. Brick porch. Rusticated brick quoins.
- **The Lord Nelson P.H., The Street:** 18th Century. Colourwashed chalk and flint, orange pantiles. Some blocked 17th Century windows. Nelson connections.



- **Ivy Farm Barn, The Street:** Early 17th Century. Squared chalk, orange pantiles. Honeycomb ventilation bricks. Tumbled brick gables. Raised cruck roof.

### IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

Much of Burnham Thorpe's character rests on the vernacular styles of its many historic but unlisted buildings. Notable among these are Ivy Farmhouse, the Methodist Chapel, The Shooting Lodge and The Lodge, Walsingham Road.

All of these important buildings have been identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional materials, their character is substantially intact, and because they often relate to other historic buildings closeby.

### POST WAR DEVELOPMENT

Apart from the two small groups of 1950's Council housing in Creake Road (Goodricks) and Back Lane (The Pightle) on the edges of the Conservation Area and the occasional infill house, there has been virtually no recent development in the village.

### TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of Burnham Thorpe Conservation Area owes much to the use of local materials in the construction of its historic buildings.

These materials include:

- Chalk: Coursed and squared blockwork and random
- Flint: Knapped and squared, random nodules
- Red Brick
- Gault brick
- Colourwash
- Orange clay pantiles
- Smut pantiles
- Welsh slate

Burnham Thorpe is dominated by chalk walling with flint relegated to gable ends and rear elevations. Orange clay pantiles are by far the most prevalent roof material.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

Although there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Burnham Thorpe Conservation Area, there are 14 sites where archaeological finds have been recorded as part of the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record. These include Manor House, Whitehall Farmhouse, Ivy Farm barn, All Saint's Church and School House, all of which are listed, the moat at Manor House and 8 other sites where finds have been recorded.

### DETRACTORS

The special quality of Conservation Areas



can easily be eroded by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials or unsympathetic paintwork, removal of walls, railings, trees and hedges. Burnham Thorpe remains largely unspoilt by such alterations but a few eyesores are noticeable including:

- UPVC and other inappropriate replacement windows in some cottages.
- The use of non-native conifers to screen development or to act as shelter belts notably along Walsingham Road near Ivy Farm, round the pump house, near the church and on the skyline north of Whitehall Farm.
- The clutter of poorly designed street furniture and overhead wires between Walsingham Road and the river by the bus shelter.
- New agricultural buildings at Ivy and Whitehall Farms which by their scale, materials and siting are poorly related to the groups of traditional buildings.
- A few poorly designed Council houses, bungalows and extensions, notably to the Nelson Memorial Hall.

## CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The overall conservation objective is to protect and reinforce the established special character of Conservation Areas and their setting.

This will be achieved by:

- encouraging the retention and maintenance of buildings which contribute to the overall character of each conservation area, whether listed or not
- ensuring that new development is sympathetic to the special qualities and character of each conservation area
- protecting the setting of the conservation area from development which adversely affects views into or out of the area
- the retention, maintenance and locally appropriate new planting of trees
- maintaining and enhancing local features and details which contribute towards an area's local distinctiveness
- working with the community to prepare schemes of enhancement
- encouraging the removal of detractors to the special character of each conservation area

## CONTACTS AND ADVICE

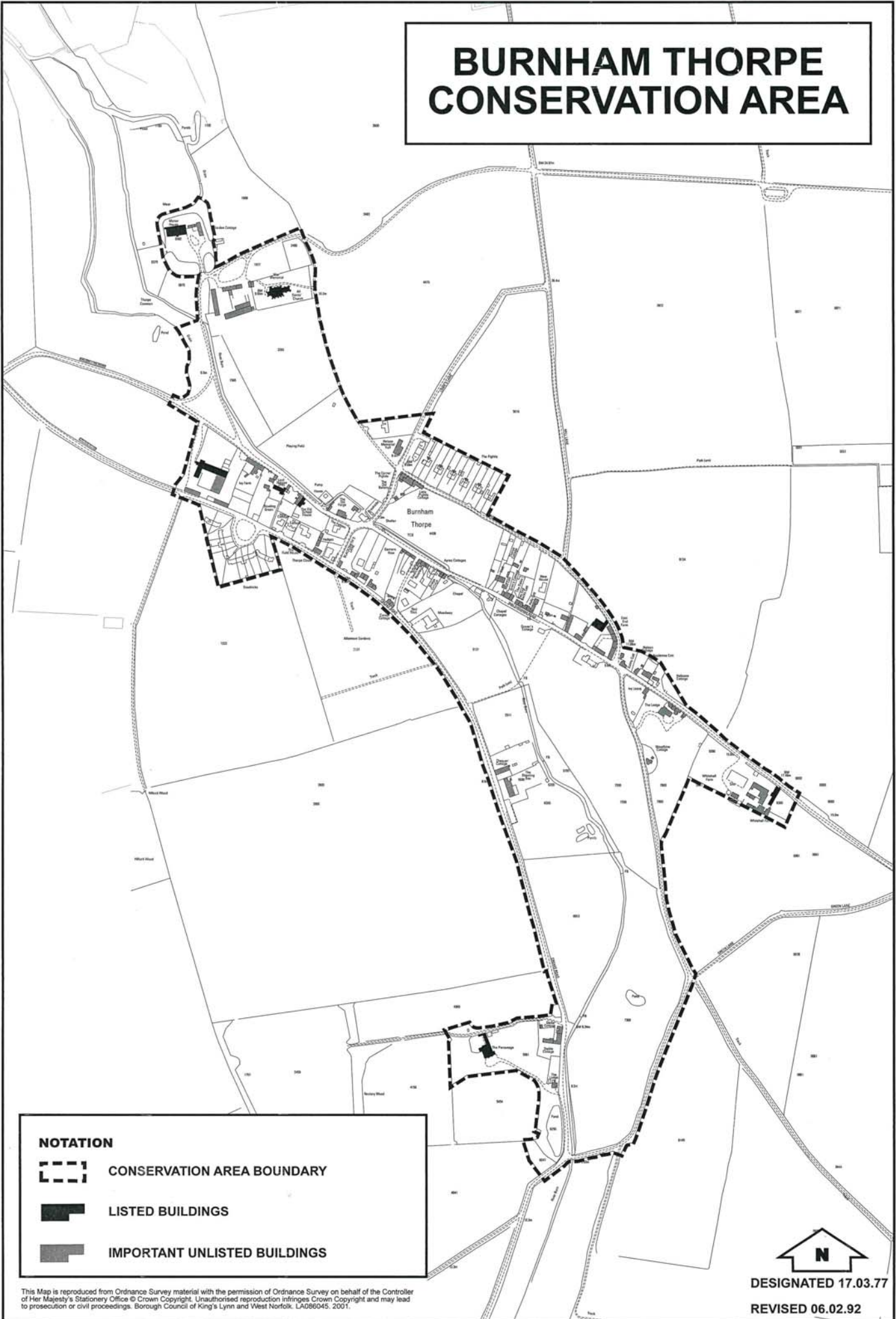
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alterations, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from the Planning Department at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some may be subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Anyone wishing to carry out work to trees within a Conservation Area should therefore seek advice from the Planning Department.



### **BOROUGH PLANNING**

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# BURNHAM THORPE CONSERVATION AREA



## NOTATION

-  CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
-  LISTED BUILDINGS
-  IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS



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REVISED 06.02.92

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